



CYCLING 'SEXISM' UPROAR



Jess Varnish sparks probe

Report by Simon Stone

BRITISH Cycling announced an independent review after Halesowen rider Jess Varnish accused technical director Shane Sutton of sexism, which led to his resignation.

The 58-year-old Australian quit his role with British Cycling yesterday afternoon (Wednesday) after being suspended pending an enquiry, saying he was stepping down in the best interests of British Cycling. But he continued to deny the claim by Varnish that Sutton had told her to "go and have a baby" after she was dropped from the Great Britain cycling team. Cycling's national governing body on Tuesday announced a review, in conjunction with UK Sport, the umbrella organisation for Olympic and Paralympic sports after Varnish on Saturday made the allegation. A British Cycling statement read: "British Cycling is announcing the formation of an independent review, in conjunction with UK Sport, of the federation's performance programmes following allegations of discriminatory behaviour."

One in ten food outlets are below par

MORE than 240 food premises in Dudley were given 'unsatisfactory food hygiene' ratings in 2015.

A total of 242 were unsatisfactory, eight ranked at the lowest mark and three shut down.

This amounted to around 10 per cent of all food premises in the town, where there are 2,438 in total.

The figures were revealed as part of a Freedom Of Information request to Dudley Council.

Three premises were closed down using Emergency Hygiene Prohibition Notices, but all later reopened.

The premises that were served the notices were Dudley Fish & Chicken Bar, Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, which closed closed on May 21 and reopened on May 27; Pensnett Superstore, High Street, Pensnett, which shut on July 28 and reopened on August 1, and Panda Paradise, New Street, Dudley, which closed on December 18 and reopened on December 23.

Mr Satinder Singh, whose father runs Pensnett Superstore, said: "We inherited problems from the previous owners. The council have been back already and they are happy. There are no problems at all now."

11,000 jobs are at risk in BHS crisis

HUNDREDS of British Home Stores staff face the axe after the company called in administrators.

The High Street giant, which has major branches at the Merry Hill shopping centre, Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Walsall, faces 'imminent bankruptcy' after a £60 million re-financing deal failed.

Staff fear the worst with 11,000 jobs at risk across 164 department stores. Stores are staying open for the time being while administrators from Duff & Phelps try to find a buyer for the loss-making business.

The failure of the company, founded at a single shop in Brixton in 1928, is the biggest retail casualty since Woolworths eight years ago.

The company employs more than 400 staff in the Black Country including a major store at the Merry Hill centre, which opened in 1989. Later BHS shops in Dudley and West Bromwich closed.

BHS has been hit by a £571m deficit in its pension fund, one of the reasons it was sold by Sir Philip Green for just £1 last year to a consortium called Retail Acquisitions. It is led by Dominic Chappell, who said "no-one was to blame" for the collapse.

"We are fully committed to the principles and active promotion of equality of opportunity and we must take any such allegations seriously."

UK Sport Chief executive Liz Nicholl said: "UK Sport expects all athletes and support personnel to adhere to the highest levels of professionalism and conduct and have a zero tolerance approach to sexist behaviour or language."

Responsibility

"We have been in formal contact with British Cycling to ensure these allegations are fully investigated."

Before travelling to Australia for training, Halesowen Cycling Club's Varnish said that she intended to continue fighting to "change the culture" of British Cycling.

The 25-year-old sprinter was dismayed over British Cycling's handling of her departure from the team, which almost certainly ended her hopes of competing in this summer's Rio Olympics.

"I want a fair chance to compete for my country," she said. "I feel that chance is being denied to me unfairly. I also want to change the culture at British Cycling and their treatment of women."

"When Shane Sutton gave his interview discussing my situation I was devastated. He said that I was 'too old' and 'not worth wasting UK Sport's money'. I realised my career with British Cycling, in Shane Sutton's eyes, was over, and that I would never get a fair trial or opportunity to compete for Great Britain again while Shane is the performance director." She insisted: "The comment that Shane Sutton told me 'to go and have a baby' is true."

Zoo staff save an abandoned chick



Dudley Zoo trainee keeper Jess Jones with the Humboldt penguin chick who was saved by vigilant staff and is now being reared

Pick up a penguin

AS World Penguin Day was celebrated on Monday Dudley Zoo keepers are celebrating saving an abandoned chick.

They are now being kept busy playing mother to the baby Humboldt penguin - in addition to caring for more than 75 other penguins at the site's Penguin Bay.

It is the largest parent-reared Humboldt group in the United Kingdom, which is a penguin originating from South America that breeds in coastal Chile and Peru.

Section leader Nicola Wright said: "It was very touch-and-go when we discovered it, as it wasn't doing well."

Wandered

"We think it's about a month-old, so has been parent-reared for a few weeks, but we've no idea who mum and dad are and why it was abandoned."

She added: "Sometimes if there's more than one chick the parents will abandon the weaker one, or if it's the stronger one it may have wandered off on its own and no-one came to get it back."

After taking the baby under their wing and feeding it three times a day with sprats, keepers are delighted with the little penguin's progress. Nicola said: "The chick is doing really well, as long as it starts to put on weight we're happy. It responded to food immediately and is steadily increasing in size."

The chick will remain in the rearing room in the aviaries at the zoo for a few more weeks before being introduced to the other penguins in the walk-through enclosure at the Castle Hill attraction.

Keepers won't know the penguin's sex until it is an adult. Dudley Zoo first started its penguin colony back in 1991 with five hand-reared chicks. That number that has grown steadily over the past 25 years and the oldest bird, Pingu, celebrated his quarter century this week.

Meanwhile, a black-and-white ruffed lemur named Earl is settling into his new home at Dudley Zoo.

He has been brought to Castle Hill as a breeding partner for female, Anna. Senior keeper Jodie Dryden travelled to Woburn Safari Park in Bedfordshire to collect the 11-year-old.

Earl has been brought to partner 13-year-old Anna in the Small Primates House. Keepers are hoping that the couple will soon breed.

TRANSPORT

Major revamp of bus station is put on hold

A PLANNED revamp of Dudley bus station, as part of a £9 million scheme to improve public transport, has been put on hold, it can be revealed.

The borough council's regeneration boss Khurshid Ahmed said there was 'no timescale' for the work to begin - despite transport chiefs saying last year that it would start in the near future.

Councillor Ahmed said the development would still go ahead and maintained that there was a 'clear vision' for the bus station but he could not say when work would start.

HEALTH

Ops cancelled as junior doctors strike

HUNDREDS of operations and appointments have been cancelled in Dudley as junior doctors strike again.

Junior doctors nationwide were called out on strike by the British Medical Association between 8am and 5pm on Tuesday and yesterday (Wednesday) in a wrangle over Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt's decision to impose a new contract.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust has seen 943 people have their appointments rearranged.

INDUSTRY

British Gas jobs may go by end of the year

BRITISH Gas could close its Oldbury site with a loss of more than 680 jobs by the end of the year, it can be revealed.

Bosses at the firm say staff at the Swallowfield One office and call centre could be subject to a phased redundancy programme ending in December if plans to close the site are rubber stamped.

It comes after British Gas announced shock proposals to close the site as part of a strategy to improve service and reduce costs to ensure competitive prices.

Warley MP John Speller met bosses last week to explore options to save the firm's operation on Wolverhampton Road.

INSIDE

Check out new homes section

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YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

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EDITORIAL:
Tel: 01384 353201/01384 353205
E-mail: dudley.chron@expressandstar.co.uk

SPORTS:
Tel: 01902 319453
E-mail: chron.sport@expressandstar.co.uk

PHOTOGRAPHIC:
Tel: John Sambrooks 01902 319431

ADVERTISING: Nicola Cope
Tel: 01902 319573
E-mail: nicola.cope@expressandstar.co.uk

PROPERTY: Marguerita Finnegan
Tel: 01902 319627
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List of candidates in the local elections

*denotes incumbent party

BAINES, Julie (Lab*); FLYNN, Ian (Lib Dem); LEE, Pete (UKIP); MISHAQ, Asan (Cons)

Belle Vale
HARTLESS, Jon Jak (Green); RUSSELL, Donella Joy (Lab*); TAYLOR, Laura (Cons)

Brierley Hill
COLLEY, Rich (UKIP); CRAIGIE, Serena (Lab*); DAVIES, Ceri (Cons); ELOK, Gordon (Green)

Brockmoor and Pensnett
GREENAWAY, Sue (Cons); HARRIS, Marcia (UKIP); MARTIN, John (Lab*); SWEENEY, Benjamin (Green)

Castle and Priory
ASTON, Margaret (Lab*); DAVIES, Tony (UKIP); WHATLING, Clive (Cons)

Coseley East
DUFFIELD, Martin (Cons); RIDNEY, Sue (Lab*); WINYARD, Craig (UKIP)

Cradley and Wollescote
ARCHER, Daniel (Green); BOLTON, Mitchell (UKIP); NAYLOR, Phil (Cons); PARTIDGE, Gaye (Lab*)

Gornal
BRANWOOD, Dave (Lab*); BROOKES, Brian Thomas (UKIP); STANLEY, David (Cons); VIRGO, Ryan (Green)

Halesowen North
BILLS, Hilary (Lab*); ELLIOTT, Jonathan (Cons); HUNT, Nathan (UKIP); PAYNE, John (Green)

Halesowen South
MAXWELL, Jenny (Green); RUSSELL, Mark (Lab); TAYLOR, Nicola (UKIP); VICKERS, David (Cons)*

Hayley Green & Cradley South
BUTTERY, Ruth (Cons); FREEMAN, Malcolm (Lab); HILL, Jennifer (UKIP); ROYLE, Colin (Green)

Kingswinford North and Wall Heath
BARRAS, Donna (Cons); RALPH, David (UKIP); TYLER, David (Lab*)

Kingswinford South
DUCKWORTH, Vicky (Green); JOHN-SON, Luke (Cons); RALPH, Lesley (UKIP); SALEEM, Shaz (Lab)

Lye and Stourbridge North
ALI, Muhammad (Cons); ROWLETT, Lawrence (Green); WALE, Vanessa (Lab*); WILDE, Wendy (UKIP)

Netherton, Woodside and St Andrew's
DANIELS, Stephen (UKIP); MCCOMISH, William (Green); PERKS, Christine (Lab); RAZZAQ, Mohammad (Cons)

Norton
ARCHER, Pam (Green); ATTWOOD, Mike (Cons); BRAMALL, Christopher

(Lib Dem); POWELL, David (UKIP); REBBECK, Clive (Lab)

Pedmore and Stourbridge East - Two seats up for election due to Mike Wood (Cons) becoming an MP
DEAN, Jonathan (Lab); HANSON, Simon (Lib Dem); HIGGINS, Phil (Lab); JONES, Les (Cons); LEES, Angus (Cons); LITTLE, Craig (Green); MUCKLOW, Stephanie (Lib Dem); SARGEANT, Lee (UKIP); WILSON, Glen (UKIP)

Quarry Bank and Dudley Wood
ARCHER, Maurice (Cons); BLAKE, Christopher (Cons); COTTERILL, Bryan (Lab*); HORTON, Dean (UKIP); KNIGHT, Adam (Trade Unionist and Soc Coalition)

Sedgley
CORFIELD, Damian (Lab); EVANS, Michael (Cons); KEASEY, Shaun (UKIP)

St James's
AHMED, Asif (Lab*); CROSSEN, Adrian Denis (Green); LLOYD, Graeme (UKIP); SULLIVAN, Wayne (Cons); WESTON, Kevin (Indep)

St Thomas's
ALI, Shaikat*; MILLWARD, Daryl (Cons); WIMLETT, Phil (UKIP)

Upper Gornal and Woodseton
BROOKES, Daniel (Green); CASEY, Keiran (Lab*); JONES, Karen (UKIP); WATTS, Neil (Cons)

Wollaston and Stourbridge Town
FRANCE, Benjamin (Lib Dem); HALE, Chris (Lab*); HOPIWOOD, Alan (Cons); LOWE, Maxim (UKIP); MOHR, Andi (Green)

Worsley
BILLINGHAM, Kevin (Lab); LEWIS, Kerry (UKIP); MACJURE, Catherine (Green); RAZZAQ, Kamran (Cons)

Battle for control will be closely-run affair

Report by Peter Madeley

THE battle for control of Dudley Town Hall is expected to be a closely-run affair as voters prepare to head to the polls on May 5.

A total of 25 seats are up for grabs across the borough, with 15 of them currently held by councillors from the ruling Labour group.

Last year's elections saw Labour retain its grip on the council, although its majority dipped as the Conservatives made ground thanks to Labour losing four seats.

The casualties included deputy leader Stuart Turner, who lost the Gornal seat to Tory Anne Millward by the slender margin of 151 votes.

The Conservatives kept hold of their seat in Sedgley by a majority of 1,040 with Tina Westwood taking the reigns from her father David Caunt, while the Tories' Jeff Hill won the Hayley Green and Cradley South seat.

Opposition

Labour currently holds 38 of the authority's 72 seats. The Conservatives form the opposition with 25 seats, while UKIP has seven councillors after failing to make any ground in 2015.

One seat each is held by an independent candidate and the Green Party. The Lib Dems are without a single councillor.

Last year the turnout was a healthy 64.99 per cent, with a total of 155,214 votes cast out of an electorate of 240,310.

There have already been two by-elections in the borough this year. Kingswinford North and Wall Heath was held by the Conservatives' Edward Lawrence after Natalie Neale quit for personal reasons in December.

Meanwhile Cathryn Bayton held the St James's seat for Labour that had been made vacant by the death of popular councillor Mary Roberts, who



Hazel Turner is standing down



Green Party's Bill McComish

served the ward for eight years. Both by-elections were marked by extremely low turnouts of just 26 per cent and 18 per cent respectively.

This time around two seats are available in Pedmore and Stourbridge East, due to Mike Wood standing down after he was elected as MP for Dudley South.

In the same ward Les Jones, who is contesting the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner elections on the same day, will defend his seat.

The seats of three cabinet members are on the line.



Les Jones, Pedmore-Stourbridge East



Gaye Partridge, Cradley & Wollescote

Environmental services boss Hilary Bills will contest Halesowen North, while Dave Branwood, member for adult social care will head to the polls in Gornal. Housing chief Gaye Partridge goes to the vote in Cradley and Wollescote against Simon Archer (Green Party), Mitchell Bolton (UKIP) and Tory Phil Naylor.

Hazel Turner is standing down after representing Hayley Green and Cradley South for 13 years.

Labour has now controlled the authority for the last four years.



Hilary Bills contests Halesowen North



Mike Wood has become an MP

Rescue deal saves more than 100 jobs at company

MORE than 100 jobs have been saved in the rescue of a crisis-hit Kingswinford furniture manufacturer.

Ultra Furniture, based on the Pends Estate, had made 84 redundancies since losing a major customer in February.

But it has now been bought in a pre-pack administration deal, allowing it to keep trading and saving the jobs of the remaining 116 staff.

Administrators from accountancy firm RSM in Birmingham were appointed and sold the business to PPKidd 56 Ltd, a new firm set up by Ultra's managing director Glen Aston. Ultra's design director Dennis Milligan has joined him as a director of the new firm.

The administrators said that despite new sales and cost-cutting measures Ultra was unable to trade out of its difficulties or secure additional investment.

Joint administrator Diana Frangou said: 'Our key priority throughout this process was to rescue the business, and we are extremely pleased to have been able to achieve this.

'Its rescue was of utmost importance, not only for its direct stakeholders but also for the local economy and community.'

Mr Aston said: 'The two key motivations behind delivering this transaction were protecting the jobs of 116 employees and ensuring that loyal customers were not let down.'

'The whole process has been very difficult and traumatic for all involved.'

Man injured as car overturned

A MAN was seriously ill in hospital with head injuries after his car overturned on the M5 motorway near Stourbridge at the weekend.

The incident happened at around 9am on Saturday between Junction 4 at Stourbridge and Junction 3 at Halesowen on the northbound carriageway.

The man, believed to be in his 40s, was cut free from the vehicle and airlifted to hospital.

The motorway was closed northbound between the junctions for Stourbridge and Birmingham West and Central.

The southbound carriageway was also closed to allow the West Midlands Air Ambulance to land. It took emergency crews about 40 minutes to free the man from the vehicle.

Road goes to one lane for resurfacing work

ONE lane of a busy Halesowen road is due to be shut until tomorrow (Friday). Bromsgrove Road A459, which links Manor Way and the M5, will run on a one-lane basis from 9.30am to 3.30pm while carriageway resurfacing is carried out by Dudley Council.

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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



AND now, positively the last in our thread of things misunderstood in childhood. A former teacher tells me of children reciting the Lord's Prayer and fervently asking not to be led into Thames Station. Thanks for all your contributions.

LIKE an errant spouse promising to improve, the European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker admits the EU has lost "parts of its attractiveness" to ordinary citizens and interfered too much in their private lives. Like so many errant spouses, he then spoils it by making a threat, calling Brexit "pie in the sky." Either way, it's too late, pal. Your pie's in the oven and we're packing our bags.

ALTHOUGH she was only 62, many of Victoria Wood's best characters were inspired by those strong, self-sacrificing, tragicomic and endlessly resourceful 1940s

women who coped with wartime separation and bereavement by carrying on as normal, whistling as they worked and never letting the tears show. In our race-memory there is a time when England was populated almost entirely by Victoria Woods, making do and mending, and was better for it.

JEREMY Corbyn is in fine form attacking the Tory plan to impose academy status on all schools. Why present him with such a target in the first place? Like the poll tax and bedroom tax, the academy plan is a gift to the Opposition. It unites Labour, divides the Tories and mobilises neighbourhoods against diktats from Whitehall. And if it's such a good idea, Dave, then why wasn't it in your election manifesto?

HER Majesty's 90th birthday has focused attention on the issue of monarchy. These are hard times for the republicans because the monarchy has never been so popular. If we had a revolution tomorrow and the next head of state was elected on the votes of 40 million citizens, I bet the successful candidate would be Prince William, by a mile.

Don't miss Peter Rhodes every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Child porn images were 'not dreadful' – judge

A 61-YEAR-OLD pervert who had 358 extreme images of child pornography and besituality on his laptop computer has been told they were not 'dreadful'.

Stanley Pienaar, of Unit Drive, Cradley Heath, appeared at Wolverhampton Crown court last week, where he was issued with a 24-month community order with a rehabilitation requirement of 50 days.

He was also placed on the sex offenders' register for five years and ordered to pay £200 towards costs of the prosecution, which will be paid in instalments of £5 a week. His laptop was also ordered to be forfeited.

Curiosity

Pienaar claimed he had accessed the images out of curiosity and only did so because he was impotent and needed ways to improve his sex life with his partner.

Police were alerted to Pienaar's perversion when his former partner accessed his laptop in May 2015 and came across images. When police seized the computer, they found 358 extreme images of children, as well as animals.

They also accessed Pienaar's internet search history which included extreme search terms for images with young girls.

Judge Nicholas Webb, sentencing Pienaar, said: "You became deliberately in possession of a number of images of children.

"The reasons you gave to

the police and the probation service in a way makes this case tinged with sadness.

"Some images that this court has to hear of sometimes are dreadful and cause gross human suffering. These, however, are not. Some children in the images are in fact clothed and in sexual poses, wearing leotards and the like.

"There are no aggravating features in this case and so I do not believe at the moment it is necessary to deprive you of your liberty.

"One can call the images disgusting, but they are not as extreme as some of the images the court sometimes has to deal with.

"You must attend your appointments as and when required. If you do not attend you could be in breach of your order and come back to court. Then the court may have another view about your sentencing."

By Jessica Labhart

Hospital starts to take shape



Cranes tower over the Midland Metropolitan Hospital site

IT'S a building site now but in two and a half years' time this will be the site of a sparkling new £350 million super-hospital.

Work looks on track for the Midland Metropolitan Hospital in Smethwick, which is due to open in October 2018.

The site is expected to transform the healthcare of hundreds of thousands of people in Sandwell and West Birmingham.

Health bosses lauded the 'significant investment' in healthcare. They also paid tribute to Councillor Darren Cooper, who died last month, for his role in the facility's development.

Toby Lewis, chief executive of Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, said: "With less than a month to go before we are 900 days to the opening of the Midland Met, this is an exciting time for our communities to look forward to a significant investment in their healthcare.

"It is also a sad time for us as we mourn the untimely death of Darren Cooper, our colleague, supporter and friend.

"As a mental health nurse and a politician, Darren touched many lives."

Cautious welcome for Tata support

BLACK Country steelworkers have given a cautious welcome to Government moves to back any potential rescue of ailing Tata Steel in the UK.

The UK and Welsh governments have said they will provide a support package worth hundreds of millions of pounds to potential buyers of the business and could take a 25 per cent stake in a new venture.

The fate of the company has been uncertain since its Indian parent revealed it considering selling or closing its loss-making UK operations, which employ around 15,000 people. That includes around 800 in the Black Country – nearly 600 at Wednesfield Steelpark and the rest in Brierley Hill, Wednesbury and Walsall.

Chris Hale, regional secretary for the main steelworkers' union, Community, said: "There has been a cautious welcome from our members locally.

"It remains to be seen what will happen next but from the union's point of view and of local workers, we consider it can only be a positive step forward.

"Our members are hopeful that a buyer will be found and welcome the Government's belated intervention. Members have been working on the Save Our Steel campaign for the last two or three years and it is a tribute to their hard work that the Government has now come to the table."

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Eleven boy racers charged after car cruiser crackdown

ELEVEN boy racers have been charged since a Black Country-wide injunction was introduced to end the menace of car cruising just over a year ago.

Police say the number of car cruising incidents has fallen sharply since the ground-breaking ban across four boroughs was brought in, and predict that the trend will continue.

Seven culprits were caught earlier this month alone, while the first to fall foul of the ban was sentenced in August.

Ex-butcher is running a slimming club

A RETIRED butcher from Stourbridge who lost four stone in 20 weeks is today (Thursday) starting his own slimming group.

Terry Piggot joined Slimming World in Hagley because he was concerned that his weight was having a detrimental impact on his health, as arthritis and high blood pressure left him taking 22 tablets a day.

After being encouraged by his wife Ann to slim, Terry was surprised by how the weight loss improved his health and general well being.

"I'm delighted, small changes to the way I eat, shop and cook have made such a big difference so quickly. It's changed my life," he said. "I really want to help other people feel as good as I do. I have decided to come out of retirement and open my own Slimming World group."

Terry's group will meet tonight at 5.30 and 7.30pm at Hagley Primary School in Park Road. For further information call 07807028308.

Contempt

The 11 racers have been convicted of contempt of court, and further prosecutions are pending, say police.

Police warn that offenders could face up to two years in prison or a large fine.

The injunction, introduced in February 2013, defines car cruising as the act of drivers meeting on the public highway on an organised or impromptu basis to race or show off in their cars.

The four Black Country councils and West Midlands Police secured the injunction after receiving hundreds of complaints about car cruising.

Chief Inspector Jed White from West Midlands Police's motorway policing unit, said car cruising had blighted the lives of residents and had a detrimental impact on businesses.

"The injunction enables us to continue to tackle those individuals who flout the laws of the road and pose a danger," he added.

Young ballet boy is jumping for joy



Stepping out - Jack Fielding, aged 10, of Halesowen, has been awarded a place at The Royal Ballet School

A YOUNG dancer has landed a place at one of the UK's most prodigious ballet schools.

Halesowen's Jack Fielding, age 10, was one of only 12 boys across the globe to qualify for the Royal Ballet's White Lodge School in Richmond, London. He will leave Hurst Green Primary School to enrol at the boarding

school where he will have his talents honed by some of the ballet world's most highly regarded teachers.

Jack, of Beaumont Road, has danced with the Birmingham Royal Ballet after first learning his fancy footwork at the Livingston Academy of Dance in Wednesbury.

The youngster only began dancing

three years ago after trying his hand at gymnastics, martial arts and swimming. His mother Wendy said: "He came up to me and said 'mum, I want to dance' and we took it from there."

His nine-year-old brother Billy's skilful footwork is being expressed in a different way, as he is already on the books at West Bromwich Albion FC.

Hotspot for fuel thefts

THIEVES have driven off from petrol stations in the Black Country without paying for fuel more than 5,100 times in the past two years, new figures reveal.

Sandwell Police reported the highest number of thefts between January 2013 and April this year.

The borough was closely followed by Walsall and Dudley with Wolverhampton recording the lowest number of thefts - known as bilking - during the time period, according to the figures released through a Freedom of Information request.

There was a total of 5,186 fuel thefts reported in the Black Country, which worked out as an average of around 126 a month.

It has been estimated that across the country the crime is costing retailers around £30 million a year.

There were a total of 13,970 thefts across the West Midlands Police force area between January 2013 and the start of April this year. Of these 2,088 were in Sandwell, 1,052 in Dudley, 1,060 in Walsall and 986 in Wolverhampton. During the same time period, there were 5,685 thefts at petrol stations across Birmingham.

Thieves have used stolen registration plates on cars to avoid being caught after driving off without paying for fuel. Police have issued anti-theft number plate screws.

Supermarket is to donate surplus food

SAINSBURY'S supermarket at Merry Hill has joined up with Dudley Salvation Army to donate food to charities.

The scheme is aimed at charities and organisations that could benefit from receiving surplus fresh food that would otherwise go to waste.

The Merry Hill store also has a donation drop-off point at the front of the store for customers to donate any well dated, long life ambient food to the charity.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



At least Villa can't be blamed for this one

ANOTHER week, another gagging order from a celebrity trying to keep their nefarious activities out of the public eye. This time the miscreant is reported to be a Premier League football manager, a married man who reportedly demanded some extra risqué photographs as a reward when his team won away. I think, on that basis we can rule out anybody connected with Aston Villa. Because they would have been in for a very long wait.

GOOD old Barack Obama, what would we do without him? During last week's visit to Britain, he urged the people of this sceptered isle to vote in favour of remaining within the European Union, arguing that America would prefer to negotiate with large trading blocs.

He's obviously forgotten that his country used to be part of the biggest trading bloc in the world. Indeed, it used to be a bit like the EU in that it charged the American people a lot of money, and gave them precious little democratic representation in return.

It was called the British Empire, and I believe there were quite a few people on the other side of the Atlantic who weren't too keen on the arrangement. In fact they were so incensed that they went to war to become an independent nation.

Still, that's all water under the bridge. If Britain votes to leave the EU, I'm sure we will take them back.

JUST a week to go now until the police and crime commissioner elections for the West Midlands, Staffordshire and West Mercia. While the late Bob Jones, who became the first elected commissioner for the West Midlands in 2012, famously said he hoped that his post would one day be made redundant, I always thought he did himself a disservice. Both Bob, his successor – not to mention countless other commissioners up and down the country – have done a commendable job in making the police more accountable and receptive to the general public. And despite fears about the cost, they have proved in many cases to be much cheaper than the old dinosaur-like old police committees.

That said, I do think it might be time to look at changing the name. Police commissioner, fair enough. But crime commissioner? Do we really want somebody who commissions crime?

A MURAL depicting somebody with a paint roller has appeared on the side of a balti house in Brownhills, sparking speculation about whether it is a Banksy. Sounds improbable, but what we do know is it looks a mess. While taking a spray can to other people's property may seem romantic in parts of London, for millions of working people graffiti is the bane of their lives. We should be punishing these idiots, not celebrating them.



Jim Charles with bodybuilders Dave Reece and Steven Collins



New generation – Steven Collins pumps iron at Jim's Gym



Jim met stars Frank Zane and Arnie Schwarzenegger

Training keeps Jim going strong at 77

DAVID CALLAGHAN meets ex-bodybuilder Jim Charles, now 77, who has run Jim's Gym in Lye for nearly 60 years

FROM meeting a teenage Arnold Schwarzenegger to hosting the British Universe championships at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, Jim Charles has seen it all.

Former bodybuilder Jim, now aged 77, has been running Jim's Gym, in Chapel Street, Lye, for nearly 60 years. And, in his own words, still 'trains as hard now as I ever did'.

He met Schwarzenegger back in 1966 during his early road to fame when he entered Mr Universe contests alongside the future Terminator.

He now stages the Midland Body Building Championships at Brierley Hill Civic Hall and is a council member with the National Amateur Body Building Association, where he has unearthed some top body builders from the area over the years as well as overseas.

Jim was awarded the prestigious honour of a gold gong in 2012 for his meticulous score-keeping and named top judge at the body building association congress event in Belfast for his precision during Britain and Universe competitions.

Dedication

He had already picked up a lifetime achievement award at the National Fitness Awards two years earlier and in 2008 he received a surprise personal letter congratulating him on his career from the biggest name to ever emerge from the bodybuilding world – Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was then governor of California.

For now though he is preparing to host the British Universe championship at Birmingham Symphony Hall in October.

"I'm busier now than I ever have been," he said. "I do around 30 shows a year.

"I'm still training hard and feeling great.



Fit and strong at 77 – boss Jim Charles, of Quarry Bank, outside Jim's Gym in Lye

"It's a great honour to be hosting the championships at the prestigious Symphony Hall and it's something I'm very much looking forward to. It's exciting that it's been brought back to Birmingham.

"I've been very dedicated to the sport and met some great characters over the years. However, Scharzenegger has been the biggest name I have come across in all the years I have been in this business."

Jim said Arnie was only 19-years-old when he first met him but he already saw he was destined for big things.

"When he was governor of California he sent me a gold sealed letter congratulating me on my all of my years in the business," he said.

"I've passed it on to my daughter now as it will be worth a few bob. I knew he would be a star as soon as I saw him and I've met him several times since.

"I always get asked when I'm going to stop training but the sky is the limit as far as I'm concerned.

"I'll keep going until I feel I can't anymore." Two athletes looking to make strides in bodybuilding are currently training at Jim's Gym.

Bricklayer Dave Reece, aged 47, from Kingswinford, is taking part in the 40s category at a championships at Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

He has also taken 19-year-old Steve Collins under his wing as he prepares for his first big event in November at the Novice Finals and British Youth Championships.

Obese

Dave said: "I trained all the time when I was younger but it's fair to say I'd let myself go. At 39 I was obese.

"The last eight years I've been training really hard and I'm a lot leaner and looking forward to the challenge of the championship next week.

Dave added: "Jim had asked me to take a look at Steve and, for a young lad, he has a lot of potential to do well in this sport."

The National Amateur Body Building Association was formed in 1950 with the first Mr Universe contest won by Steve Reeves, who went on to make more than 30 Hercules movies.

Schwarzenegger is himself a four-time winner and his own legacy is commemorated in the Arnold Classic annual bodybuilding competition.

He went on to star in his own Hercules movie before becoming one of Hollywood's biggest stars, known for the Terminator movies, True Lies, Total Recall, Twins, Predator and many other box office blockbusters.

The late Oscar Heidenstam was appointed Secretary in 1956 and continued to drive the association forward for more than 30 years.

NABBA International was formed during a London meeting in 1984 and became host to the European and World Championships. The international branch is now supported by more than 50 countries.

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Tell young about life in UK before the EU

THERE has never been a time when it was more important for parents and grandparents to impart knowledge, wisdom and guidance to our young.

For too long we, as a nation, have allowed, without protest, successive governments to lead us into the mess we find ourselves in.

We are going to be, mind-numbingly bombarded with information and propaganda that will confuse, frighten and mislead many.

Those of us who were involved in the referendum of 1975 can still remember what it was like to live in a Britain free

from EU legislation and regulation. So we are not afraid of the prospect of living outside of it once again.

Propagandists will try to tell us that being in the EU has kept the peace in Europe.

What they don't tell us is that there is no need to go to war when we are lying down and meekly surrendering our freedoms.

The thing that is so glaringly obvious about the EU is the fact not once has this union managed to balance the books.

Any other organisation that ran

their affairs in this manner would have gone out of business long ago.

Surely this points either to incompetence or corruption?

Who in their right mind would choose to remain tied to such an organisation? The answer to that is the politicians and lawyers who are getting very rich out of it.

The important arguments for Brexit are there for all to see if we do not allow ourselves to be hoodwinked again as we were in 1975.

T CROFT
Wall Heath

Hypocrisy from the Americans

THE United States of America, while still neutral about World War Two in 1941, had a system of lend-lease programmes to those fighting Nazi Germany. Great Britain borrowed billions of pounds from America and our good friends the Canadians – we finally made the last payment of £45.5 million of our debt for freeing Europe in December 2006.

Now, despite spending over 60 years paying off a debt to liberate Europe, Mr Obama thinks that we should continue to pay £55m per day for the privilege of living under the Brussels jackboot instead of the German jackboot.

The hypocrisy is that they still have an American institute for weights and measures. They constantly refuse to adopt the British/European system of metric measurement. The only other countries that have not adopted metric are Myanmar and Liberia.

G E FANTHOM
Swindon

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
Chronicle Editorial,
51-53 Queen Street
Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL

dudley.chrons@
expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Future without EU is sweatshop Britain

THOSE dreamers who support an EU exit have completely overlooked a critical issue. Europe is 26 miles away from the UK but Brazil, India, China and Australia are half way around the world. America is 3,000 miles across the Atlantic. Transport costs money and the cost of trading with such partners in terms of exports makes our goods uncompetitive. If it were that easy, why aren't we exporting more goods to them anyway?

It is clear that they would rather buy cheap from sweatshops in Asia. In order to compete with those without trading to Europe, we too would have to become a sweatshop. That is not a scare story, it is a simple fact of business.

The answer to our trade gap with the EU is for us to buy more homemade produce and to make our goods more appealing.

As for Boris Johnson's claim that Mr Obama is being hypocritical and that we should not listen to the voice of America, Boris should remember that he has been a senior member of a government that has embraced all things American from de-regulation to metropolitan mayors and academies.

M CLIFF
Wall Heath

'Selfish and arrogant' attitude

WHAT an amazing view Mark Andrews gave of his selfish, arrogant attitude of his right to park his car on the pavement (In My View, The Chronicle, April 21).

The comparison he gave of no pavement parking in London because of the underground railway is totally irrelevant.

He is obviously oblivious to pedestrians who when trying to navigate around parked vehicles have to go on to the road to pass by.

Perhaps he should think about blind and visually impaired people, together with mothers with children in pushchairs, who have to contend with people like Mark Andrews, who couldn't care less about what pavements are supposed to be used for.

Better still he might like try walking along a pavement with a blindfold over his eyes to see how its like to get around parked vehicles if you can't see.

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Lance Corporal Thomas Dunn, another Dudley soldier remembered



The Mayor of Dudley, Councillor Steve Waltho, centre, was at the book launch



Author John Hale started work on his book about Dudley's war dead in 2009



Killed in action - Pte Sydney Bird, one of the soldiers remembered in the book dedicated to the war dead

Book tells stories behind names on the memorial

UP until now, there has not been much known about the soldiers of Dudley who fought in the First World War, apart from their name and possibly their rank.

But thanks to a new book commemorates 720 of the borough's soldiers, we can finally discover the tales behind the names. The most striking story is of the five Ennis brothers - William (b.1888), Samuel (b.1890), John (b.1893), Albert (b.1897) and Samson (b.1898) - with the eldest, William, the only survivor.

All five answered the call to arms, Samuel serving with the South Staffordshire Regiment, while his brothers served in the Worcesters. The picture of the five appeared in the Midland Chronicle on July 16, 1915.

Corporal Samuel Ennis of the 7th South Staffs was the first to be killed, dying of wounds in hospital on October 18, 1915. He recorded details of his enlistment at Wolverhampton Town Hall on August 14, 1914, ten

MEMORY LANE

By David Callaghan

days before Britain declared war, and his training at Lichfield Barracks, Grantham and Frensham before he left from Liverpool on June 30, 1915, bound for Malta.

Galipoli

From there he sailed to Alexandria in Egypt before landing at Gallipoli in Turkey, where he received a bullet wound in his left foot and was later hit by shrapnel in his shoulder, foot and neck in three separate incidents. He has no known grave and his name is recorded on the Hellas Memorial to the fallen of the Gallipoli Campaign.

Former Black Country Society president Roy Peacock, helped author John Hale create the book, and found the story of the Ennis brothers fascinating.

He said: "Together we discovered some remarkable stories, which gave

light to the soldiers as people, rather than them just purely a name."

Albert Ennis, of the Worcestershire Regiment, was the next brother to be killed, on December 12, 1915, and he is buried at Hebuterne Cemetery in France. Lance Corporal John Ennis died on April 25, 1917. He too has no known grave and has his name carved upon the Thiepval Memorial to the missing of the Somme battlefields.

Private Samson Ennis died on August 26, 1917. His body was never recovered and he is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial in Belgium.

Surviving brother, William, returned home to Dudley where he had six daughters. He is buried in Dudley Cemetery.

At the book launch, Councillor Steve Waltho, Mayor of Dudley, said: "I believe it's extremely important to remember those who fought bravely for freedom." The book, Dudley's 1914-1918 War Memorial and the 720 Men Commemorated, is priced at £10, from the Black Country Society website or email roy.peacock@blueyonder.co.uk



Tragedy - the Ennis Brothers, only one of the five Dudley brothers who enlisted survived the First World War

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day for a home-grown extravaganza. BBC Good Food Stage – this newest feature is sponsored by Lakeland and features a combination of celebrity interviews and recipe demos.

Discover and Learn by Lexus – an interactive feature consisting of three themed masterclasses which focus on different areas – cupcake decorating, sushi making and Taste Sensation.

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Plea for help after raiders target charity

THIEVES have stolen thousands of pounds of equipment and ransacked offices in a spate of burglaries at a charity base in Kingswinford.

Good News Recycling, which helps ex-offenders get back on track, was first targeted by thieves in early March but has been hit again on five separate occasions since.

The raiders had forced their way inside after cutting padlocks off the gate, smashing a window at the rear of the building and even climbing through the toilet roof.

Several flat screen televisions, £250 petty cash and personal belongings have been taken along with the offices and washing machines destroyed.

The further raids took place between March 12 to 29, following the first break-in on March 6 where £15,000 worth of equipment was taken.

Steve Tracey, who set up the business six years ago, said they are now appealing to members of the public for support and volunteering.

Mr Tracey, aged 48, explained: "Perhaps they came the first time and thought they would try their luck again."

"It's absolute stupidity and these thieves should realise that they are

only robbing the poor of our work and goods.

"They have ransacked the offices and taken sentimental items belonging to me.

"Although we managed to get up and running following the first incident we have had to get security on site in an attempt to stop these series of crimes.

"Following the first article in the Express and Star we had generous donations from members of the public. But we still need help.

Tools

"We set up a work programme to go out with Age Concern during the summer months but since they stole out tools so we couldn't do that.

"Even if we could get local businesses to sponsor us it would mean so much."

The charity is linked with Dudley Police's Offender Management Team so former offenders can use their skills to renovate furniture that can then be sold to help vulnerable people.

To donate call Good News Recycling on (01384) 400596 or 07708830576 or visit their Facebook page.



Staff member Josh Hotchkiss with damage caused during a recent break-in at Good News Recycling

Motorist in 80mph police chase jailed

A MOTORIST had been jailed after leading police on a 12-mile chase through the Black Country in broad daylight at speeds reaching 80mph has been jailed.

For 20 minutes, Abdul Rashid carried out 'a litany of dangerous driving manoeuvres' including overtaking on blind corners, driving on the wrong side of the road and causing two collisions.

Mr William Dudley, prosecuting, said that police officers in Lye began following Rashid's Volkswagen Golf at 10.45am on May 22 last year, believing it to be involved in the transportation of drugs.

Three unmarked police cars tried to stop his vehicle in a 'boxing in' manoeuvre but he broke free and drove off.

Mr Dudley said: "What ensued was 20 minutes worth of dangerous driving, covering a distance of 10 to 12 miles at significantly excessive speeds."

Swerve

Rashid, a father of four who runs a wholesale business, notched up at least 60mph on 30mph streets, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. He collided with one car in Cradley and caused another driver in Amblecote Road to swerve, leading a collision with another vehicle.

Rashid abandoned his car and fled, along with a passenger, but both were tracked by the force helicopter.

Rashid told police he had 'panicked' when the unmarked police cars boxed him in, thinking he was going to be robbed.

Defending Rashid, Mr Duncan Craig said the passenger had told Rashid that he was carrying drugs 'which led to the course of driving we have seen.'

Rashid, 36, of Barrett Street, Smethwick, pleaded guilty to dangerous driving. He was jailed for 12 months and disqualified from driving for four years.

Gala charity dinner is to honour footballer

FOOTBALLING legends will descend on the Black Country for a gala dinner to celebrate the life of Busby Babe Duncan Edwards on what would have been his 80th birthday.

The event on October 1 will be a tribute to the Manchester United and England legend, who grew up on Dudley's Priory estate. Duncan, who was born in 1936, first honed his skills in Priory Park and became the youngest England international until Michael Owen.

But his life was tragically cut short when he died, aged 21, on February 21, 1958, of his injuries 13 days after the Munich Air Disaster which claimed the lives of several of his team mates in the legendary 'Busby Babes' Manchester United team.

Now his football achievements and the anniversary of his birth will be marked at the gala event at Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

The driving force behind the plans is historian and film-maker Rose Cook, who produced a film about the gifted player 20 years ago after seeing his grave at Dudley Cemetery covered with flowers and scarves from adoring fans.

Inspired

It inspired her to find out more about the player and since then she has given many talks about his life and career.

Ahead of the gala dinner, she will be making a new film which will be screened on the night.

Rose said: "Researching and telling the story of Duncan's life has been a labour of love for me for nearly a quarter of a century."

"I'm a Dudley girl, born not far from where Duncan was born in the Woodside area before he moved to the Priory Estate. I have got to know his family very well."

"It is a huge honour to be able to talk about Duncan and to keep his memory alive. I give talks about Duncan Edwards on cruise ships and it is amazing that



Footballer Duncan Edwards

people of all ages and from many different countries around the world want to hear about his life."

She is backing a campaign to get a blue plaque commemorating the player installed in the town, a project which has been launched by Dudley North MP Ian Austin and Councillor Dave Tyler.

Tickets are set to go on sale soon for the event, which will include entertainment and a dinner.

Organisers are remaining tight-lipped about the guest list for the moment but it expected to include local and national footballing stars, Duncan's family and other Busby Babes' relatives, together with celebrities from the world of entertainment.

Proceeds will be split between Stourbridge's Mary Stevens Hospice and James Bulger Memorial Trust. Tickets cost £35 from Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

For more information about the event or to share stories about Duncan, email rosecook69@hotmail.co.uk

£1.8k is raised for cancer care

A KIND-HEARTED Netherton man raised £1,800 in aid of Russells Hall Hospital's cancer unit in memory of two relatives who died in the same month.

Carl Bottley lost his father, Edwin, and mother-in-law, Alice Millington, both aged 80, to forms of blood cancer within a matter of weeks in January.

Mr Bottley, aged 48, decided to organise a charity event in aid of the Georgina Ward. Held at Netherton Sports and Social Club, the entertainment, auction of football memorabilia and sale of raffle tickets raised the sum.

He said: "The Georgina Ward was wonderful in looking after my dad and mother-in-law in their final days. I knew straight away after their deaths that I wanted to give something back as a thank you for all their hard work."

Storage help theatre plea

A THEATRE group in Dudley has appealed for help to find a permanent base for its equipment.

Dudley Little Theatre has been forced to use corners of garages since losing its latest storage space in Netherton Arts Centre.

The theatre company, based at Netherton since 1947, has now run out of options.

To help, contact theatre chairman Rebecca Cleo on 01902 566077 or 07954 424555.

Flag will be a memorial

PLANS to erect a 20ft high flagpole in the centre of Netherton in memory of a community stalwart are set to go ahead.

The towering pole is proposed for a spot next to the Titanic Anchor and has been recommended for approval by Dudley Council planners.

The scheme is in memory of Ivor Lucas, of the Friends of Netherton Park and the Netherton Regeneration Group, who died in September 2014.

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A CRADLEY Heath leisure centre celebrated its 40th birthday with a family fun day in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support.

The event took place at Haden Hill Leisure Centre on Barrs Road, Cradley Heath, on April 24.

A fun-packed day of activities for children with a soft play area, ball pit, inflatable world and bouncy castle. Free swimming lessons, a tombola with raffle prizes and a visit from Haden Cross fire truck were also on offer.

Damian Kirkman, Haden Hill Leisure Centre manager, said: "The centre has welcomed millions of people through its doors over the last 40 years and has hosted thousands of events. We even held the Snooker World Cup here in 1979."

For more information on the centre visit the www.slt-leisure.co.uk website.

Open day at tennis club

A TENNIS club in Cradley Heath will be on the look out for the next Andy Murray at their annual open day.

Old Hill Tennis Club, in Barrs Road, will be holding its open day on Saturday, May 7, from 12 noon to 4pm.

Refreshments will be available and club members will be on hand to offer advice and tips to those interested in taking up the sport. The club has four outdoor courts.

FOCUS ON CRADLEY AND CRADLEY HEATH

Primary school praised for its exceptional performance

PUPILS, staff and parents at a Cradley Heath primary school are celebrating being placed in the top 20 per cent nationally for children's attainment.

Corngreaves Primary Academy, in Plant Street, were recognised for their exceptional 2015 performance by the Schools, Students and Teachers network (SSAT).

Data analysis revealed that the results put the school into the top achievement bracket. It follows the schools SATs results seeing 97 per cent of key stage 2 pupils achieving at least a level four in reading, writing and maths.

Sue Williamson, Chief Executive of SSAT, said: "It's my great pleasure to commend Corngreaves Primary on their excellent 2015 performance, and to have the opportunity to highlight and share their great work at the SSAT Educational Outcomes celebration event."

"I have the privilege of visiting a lot of schools and I am always impressed by the creativity of teachers in engaging and inspiring their students."

"I hope that SSAT's Educational Outcomes award will highlight the professionalism, commitment and hard work of the leaders, teachers and students at Corngreaves Primary."

By Clare Butler

Recognising and sharing successes like this is at the heart of SSAT's mission, so I'm delighted to congratulate Corngreaves Primary on their achievement."

SSAT was founded from the former Specialist Schools and Academies Trust in May 2012. They work with teachers to celebrate achievement.

Head of school at Corngreaves, Sarah Green, was 'exceptionally proud' of the students work and staff dedication. She said: "This award reflects the hard work and dedication of all children and the teaching staff. It shows that Corngreaves children are capable of achieving wonderful things. We are exceptionally proud of everyone."

Corngreaves Primary and Timbertree Primary, in Cradley Heath, joined forces to become a federation in 2010.



Cradley Heath Creative's Dave Francis, Fran Wilde and Liz Lee at The Hollybush

Festival at pub is toast of the town

SCORES of people turned up for a 'wonderful' grassroots arts festival in Cradley Heath.

The second annual event organised by Cradley Heath Creative proved to be a resounding success after organisers increased this year's event, held earlier this month, to a two-day celebration of the arts.

The festival was held at the Hollybush Pub, in Newtown Road. Fran Wilde, the chairman of Cradley Heath Creative, said: "It was brilliant. We had good crowds on Saturday but it was even better on Sunday."

"So many people came forward to perform that there was not enough room for everyone to take part."

"It was just wonderful because it's only a small place. We also had small groups singing songs and other entertainers like Billy Spakemon as well. There were comedy groups, a DIY workshop and a pottery session."

Step back in the past on May Day

VISITORS will be able to get a taste of life 100 years ago at Haden Hill Hall, House and Park on May Day Bank Holiday Monday.

Entry is free to the 1916-style village fair at the museum and park off Barrs Road, Cradley Heath, on Monday from noon to 4pm.

Youngsters can enjoy Punch and Judy shows and balloon modelling. Visitors can also step into Cradley Heath Creative's Oss Box to make War Horse-style masks to take home, or enjoy garden games on the lawn as well as crafts, quizzes and trails. There will be live music from Eureka Jazz in the park.

Jane Hanney, Sandwell Council museums manager, said: "Once again we'll be opening Haden Hall for May Day. Visitors will be able to see a 17th century dining room and kitchen."

For details call (01384) 569444.

Choir to sing at pet service

CRADLEY Heath Male Voice Choir and violinist Pete Hartley will be in concert at Worcester Cathedral on Saturday.

The music will start at 12.30pm in the Chapter House, prior to a unique pets service being hosted by The Hall Green Retired Greyhound Trust. Pets are welcome to attend, with a parade through the city centre beginning at 1pm, followed by the short service at 2.30pm, during which the choir will sing.

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TILE Choice is celebrating its 25th anniversary in business this year.

Established in 1991, Tile Choice quickly established an excellent reputation and impressive customer base, which saw the business expand rapidly across the local area and beyond.

Now boasting an impressive 16 individually designed stores throughout the West and East Midlands areas, the business continues to go from strength to strength.

Marketing director, Lee Rudkin said: "We pride ourselves on the excellent service and quality products we offer our customers. Every member of the Tile Choice team is expertly trained and able to help customers find the right products for them, as well as giving practical advice on how to plan and measure a room for tiling."

And it's this emphasis on staff training that really sets the company aside from the competition.

Mr Rudkin added: "The key to customer satisfaction is ensuring that our staff are trained in all aspects of the tile industry, so

Tile Choice is the largest independent tile retailer in the country and is well known for its industry-leading service, products and designs. Here is the firm's story, in its own words, of its rise to success.

that they can properly advise the customer and meet their needs."

The company even employs mystery shoppers to visit their stores a couple of times a month to ensure that standards remain as high as possible.

Quality runs throughout the company and that's why clients can rest assured that they're buying excellent products, even though the prices are kept impressively low.

Latest

"We buy direct from leading manufacturers and because we buy in massive quantities we're able to keep prices low for our customers."

Tile Choice hold over £5million pounds worth of stock at their centralised 30,000 square foot warehouse and distribution centre.

"Clients can rest assured that we will never run out of stock and that we always have the most up-to-date choice of products."

The business work hard to stay ahead when it comes to trends and always ensure that their showrooms are packed with the latest designs.

Mr Rudkin said: "Porcelain wood-effect tiles are really popular at the moment as well as vintage-looking tiles with Victorian-inspired designs."

And the company's extensive and diverse ranges meet the needs of both domestic clients and the trade alike.

Tile Choice stock an extensive range of tools and tiling accessories, including well-known branded products, plus its own-brand adhesive tubs and bags, making a tiling job easy.

"We offer practical advice for those tiling themselves, but can also recommend local trusted trades who can complete the job if you prefer."

Customer orders are quickly dealt with via the company's warehouse, which offers support to stores, allowing customer orders to be picked out on the same-day and dispatched quickly nationwide.

"We have our own vehicle fleet to service stores on a daily basis, along with a customer delivery service that's available via every store."

The company's high standards have even been officially recognised in the industry.

"We have won awards three out of

four years running at The Tile Association (TTA) awards, which is an excellent accolade in the industry."

Tile Choice also work closely with their local community, helping to raise money for charity and sponsoring Wolverhampton Rugby Club and Walsall Football Club.

"Giving something back to the local community is really important to us, we get involved with a lot of charity events and sponsor our local teams."

The business was even on hand to help out several local families who appeared on BBC's hit show DIY SOS, where they supplied tiles so that their home renovations could be completed by the show.

So, if you are looking for an up-to-the-minute design for your kitchen, bathroom or ensuite; a traditional style or contemporary design for your lounge, hallway or conservatory, Tile Choice will meet your every requirement at exceptional prices and with a bank holiday sale this weekend every tile has 50 per cent off until Monday May 2.

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Now's a grape time to produce English wines

IT used to be considered a novelty, but British wine sales are booming.

Sales of English wine have increased by more than a fifth as consumers realise the quality of local vineyards and choose to buy British.

Sales at Waitrose have increased by 22 per cent at the start of this year on top of an 80 per cent year-on-year rise that was reported in December, making it the fastest growing drinks range.

That is great news for Halfpenny Green Vineyards, near Dudley, where marketing assistant Ben Godbehere said: "We are seeing a 20 per cent rise in sales, so that figure sounds about right."

"Over the past few years, we have seen a huge rise in sales of our wine, particularly our most popular, a sparkling rose, which costs about £19.95.

"I think an element of the rise in popularity of UK wines is down to the warmer summer temperatures we have been having in the UK in recent years."

Waitrose has recognised the quality of wines at Halfpenny Green, Bobbington. It will soon start selling its Halfpenny Green Tom Hill 2014 in stores and online, as well as at its John Lewis Food Hall on Oxford Street in London.

Head winemaker Clive Vickers said: "Our Long Acre 2014 dry white has featured in local M&S stores and online exclusively for the past year, and in addition, our Rose Sparkling 2013 and Mercia 2014 have just been added to the range."

"We are smaller producers here in England but we can produce award-winning wine," he added.



Halfpenny Green Vineyard owner Clive Vickers checks the grapes used to make red wine near Bobbington

Road race collision driver is locked up

AN MOT tester who left a woman with serious injuries after racing a fellow Mercedes driver at 90 mph along the Birmingham New Road has been put behind bars for nearly three years.

Vaqaas Khan, aged 30, was goaded into the race by his opponent near the Birchley Island, Oldbury, shortly after midnight on September 21, 2014. He had reached a speed of 90mph in his Mercedes-AMG in a bid to catch his rival who suddenly switched lanes at the junction of Titford Road to avoid a car attempting to join the road.

Prosecuting Siobhan Collins said Khan was travelling too fast to react and smashed into the Audi A3 being driven by Gurpreet Goroya, then aged 25.

The engine from the Audi was ripped from the car and sent flying 100 metres down the road, near to Asda.

Khan's Mercedes - also occupied by his two brothers and brother-in-law - burst into flames.



Vaqaas Khan: road race

early signs of arthritis. She has been told she will need a hip replacement in the next ten years.

"She can't walk long distances and she panics if she has to go in a car."

"She is also unable to work."

Appearing at Wolverhampton Crown Court for sentencing, Khan, of Lea Road, Penn Fields, Wolverhampton, was jailed for two years and seven months.

He was banned from driving for three-and-a-half years having previously admitting causing serious injury by dangerous driving.

Gurdeep Garcha, defending, described the incident as a 'serious lapse in judgement' by his client.

He said: "My client is a married man of good character which makes what he did all the more unfathomable."

He added: "He had previously been a law-abiding man. What he did was out of character and a serious lapse in judgement which, of course, had serious consequences."

More diagnosed with TB

THE number of people diagnosed with tuberculosis in the Black Country and Staffordshire has doubled, new figures have revealed.

There have been 35 suspected cases of the disease in the area during the first three months of the year - more than double the same period in 2015 when there were 17. The number of patients diagnosed with TB in Dudley was six.

Online dealer fined for selling unsafe car

A ROGUE car dealer from Dudley who sold a Mazda MX5 found to be unsafe for the road has been ordered to pay out more than £3,000 at court.

Umar Ijaz, 36, of St Michael's Grove, pleaded guilty to supplying a vehicle in an unroadworthy condition and to two offences relating to professional diligence and a misleading description.

In the case, brought by Dudley Trading Standards Ijaz - trading as Lexuschap on Ebay - sold a Mazda MX5 to an unsuspecting buyer for £700. Six days after the car was bought, it broke down and was taken to a garage where it was found not safe to drive. The buyer complained to trading standards after unsuccessfully trying to get a refund from Ijaz.

An expert inspected the car and found several faults including severe corrosion of the metal on which the seat belts were anchored and a defective handbrake. There was evidence the vehicle had been involved in a previous head-on crash.

Ijaz was fined £1,050, ordered to pay £640 compensation and £1,300 costs, as well as a £40 victim surcharge.



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More diagnosed with TB

THE number of people diagnosed with tuberculosis in the Black Country and Staffordshire has doubled, new figures have revealed.

There have been 35 suspected cases of the disease in the area during the first three months of the year - more than double the same period in 2015 when there were 17. The number of patients diagnosed with TB in Dudley was six.

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Ruth Goodman and Alec Lawless: Victorian Pharmacy at Blists Hill



Highley Station featured in 2005's The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe



Top Gear presenter Richard Hammond drove up the Elan Valley dam

TV boost to tourism

Report by Mark Andrews

WITH its heart-warming storylines, cute animals and glorious scenery, The Durrells has been ITV's big ratings hit this year.

The biographical series about the childhood of naturalist Gerald Durrell, who discovers his love of animals after moving to Corfu with his widowed mother, has brought a feel-good factor to Sunday night television since its launch at the start of the month.

The opening episode pulled in 6.3 million viewers, the highest debut ratings for any drama series this year, and by the start of this week a further 1.8 million had seen it through catch-up services.

And while its popularity has clearly been good news for ITV, there is also another spin-off effect from the series – a surge in interest from holidaymakers considering a break on the Greek island.

Roger Blake, of Shropshire-based Liberty Travel, says he has noticed more people coming in and asking about Corfu over the past couple of weeks.

"It's always been relatively popular, but I think people have seen the programme and seen that whole way of life, that old Greece that still exists in Corfu today," he says.

"I think when you get a television programme which shows off the area as a tourist would see it, as I think this programme does, it does make a difference."

One travel operator has predicted that an extra 8,000 British visitors will take their holiday in Corfu this year as a direct result of the programme.

Impact

At the same time, the number of searches for "Corfu holiday" on Google more than doubled overnight after the first episode was screened. The impact of TV exposure on visitor numbers for tourist attractions is something that should not be underestimated.

For example, Blists Hill Victorian Town in Madeley, near Telford, has been used as a film set numerous times over the years, and director of marketing Paul Gossage says it makes a big difference.

Last year the museum hosted Celebrity Masterchef, where John Torode and Gregg Wallace were joined by actors Scott Maslen and Sheree Murphy, singer and presenter Mica Paris, Pussycat Doll Kimberly Wyatt, The Wanted singer Tom Parker, singer-songwriter Chesney Hawkes, and TV presenters Sam Nixon and Rylan Clark.

Mr Gossage says the appearance played a major role in raising the museum's profile, and helped it reach half a million visitors last year.

"It had a remarkable impact, we had record number of visitors to our website, and we had a very healthy summer," he says.

"Of course we can't be sure that it is entirely down to the TV exposure, but let's say it is a very happy coincidence."

The museum was also the setting for Martin Clunes' drama Arthur and George, about the



ITV's Sunday night drama The Durrells has sparked a big rise in the number of people wanting to take a holiday in Corfu

life of Sherlock Holmes creator Arthur Conan Doyle, which was broadcast last year, and the site has also hosted Antiques Roadshow and the documentary series Victorian Pharmacy.

And Mr Gossage says the interest continues many years after the cameras have stopped rolling.

"We had Doctor Who here about 25 years ago, and we still get Doctor Who fans coming around asking about it," he says.

The museum was also used as a location for the Merchant Ivory film The Feast of July, which also made use of the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley in the West Midlands.

With its lovingly restored GWR-style railway stations, immaculately preserved trains and glorious scenery, it is little wonder that the Severn Valley Railway is in big demand as a filming location.

Clues

Perhaps most famously, it was the setting for the sitcom Oh, Doctor Beeching!, which starred Su Pollard, Jeffrey Holland, Stephen Lewis and Paul Shane, which ran for two series during the mid-1990s.

Its Hampton Loade station was also used in the filming of the 1995 movie The Englishman Who Went Up A Hill But Came Down A Mountain, which starred Hugh Grant and Tara Fitzgerald. Arley station was used for the wartime movie

Goodnight Mister Tom, which starred John Thaw as a kindly widower who took in a wartime evacuee, while Bewdley station was used in the filming of The Thirty-Nine Steps starring Robert Powell.

One of the biggest surges in interest followed the 2005 release of the hugely popular The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, from CS Lewis's much loved Chronicles of Narnia.

The opening three-minute sequence showed the film's main characters, young evacuees, take the GWR steam locomotive from Paddington to the countryside.

Highley Station is the first stop on the journey before the train travels on to Bridgnorth, crossing the Oldbury Viaduct en route. Thanks to prominent clues to the 2005 film's Midland setting, the SVR was snowed under with inquiries from people eager to visit the attraction.

Marketing manager David Mee says: "We've had people asking where filming was done."

"The locomotive, Bradley Manor, is back in service, having just been restored, and people have fond memories of the TV programmes that have been filmed here."

The railway also featured in Escape To The Country in 2014, and Mr Mee says short slots like that also help bring in trade.

Mr Mee adds: "We do get people coming on the Severn Valley Railway, saying 'we saw Mr and Mrs So-and-so on the railway while they

were looking for a house'."

Another attraction benefiting from the oxygen of publicity given by television is the Elan Valley in Powys.

Top Gear presenter Richard Hammond was shown scaling the valley's famous dam in a Land Rover in February last year, a feat that not only featured on the show but also made worldwide headlines because of the dramatic photographs taken at the time.

The Black Country Living Museum in Dudley has been the setting for numerous television series in recent years.

Profile

Crime drama WPC56 and jazz-era series Dancing On The Edge were both shot at the museum, but it is probably period gangland series Peaky Blinders which has done the most to raise the profile of the attraction.

The series, based around the activities of crime boss Tommy Shelby in the aftermath of the First World War, returns for its third series next month, and the museum says it has undoubtedly played a part in the eight per cent rise in visitor numbers last year.

To make the most of this publicity, the museum has started holding Peaky Blinders theme nights, which have sold out within hours of going on sale.

"It's difficult to put a number on a number on how many visitors have come because of



Black Country Living Museum prepares to host its Peaky Blinders themed event

Peaky Blinders, but we know it's had a positive impact," says the museum's Abbey Bird.

Laura Wakelin, director of communications and marketing, added: "Film crews have become a more familiar sight at Black Country Living Museum over the past few years. A key focus in our new strategic plan 2015-20 is to grow and diversify our income streams in order to become a sustainable self-reliant organisation."

"Of course the museum benefits from the national exposure that comes with certain productions but it is difficult to pinpoint the exact impact on visitor numbers – though we do know anecdotally that seeing the museum on TV has encouraged people to visit us."

"There is also some evidence of the positive impact of filming in the museum's shops where we've seen a jump in themed gift sales – flat cap sales, for example, have increased alongside Peaky Blinders-themed ale."

But it is not just about visitor numbers. In these times of reduced public funding, it also provides a very useful revenue stream.

In 2012, the year that Dancing On The Edge and WPC56 were filmed, the Black Country Living Museum took £26,385 from filming rights.

Mr Mee says film revenue is useful to the SVR too, though the sums are comparatively small compared to the cost of running the railway. "It's a nice extra," he says.

Court puts brakes on highway menace

STREET racers are being warned they could lose their car, their job or even their liberty if they take part in a car cruise in the Black Country.

An injunction is in force banning people from taking part in a car cruise anywhere within the four Black Country boroughs – Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton – or from promoting, organising or publicising such an event.

The injunction defines car cruising as the act of drivers meeting on the public highway on an organised or impromptu basis to race or show off in their cars, and anyone breaching it risks being in contempt of court, for which they could face up to two years in prison and a fine.

To date, 11 people have been convicted of breaching the injunction and have received suspended prison sentences and ordered to pay costs.

Police can also take action against individuals for traffic offences including driving without due care and attention, driving without insurance – no insurance policy covers illegal street racing – or driving an unroadworthy vehicle.

The injunction was introduced last year to tackle the menace of car cruising, which was blighting the lives of residents and having a detrimental impact on businesses throughout the region. And it has had an instant impact, with police and councils reporting a significant reduction in car cruising across the Black Country, and the problem being eliminated altogether in many areas. The injunction prohibits a number of activities and



The injunction also prohibits car cruise gatherings like this, in a supermarket car park



CCTV footage captured car cruising taking place

consequences typically associated with car cruising, including speeding, racing or driving in convoy, performing stunts, obstructing the highway, excessive noise, and causing the risk of harm to people or property.

Chief Inspector Jed White from West Midlands Police's Motorway Policing unit said: "Street racing is completely unacceptable and we will not tolerate it."

"People who think about taking part in a car cruise – whether as a driver, passenger or even spectator – should be very clear about the likely consequences."

"The same applies to people who either organise a car cruise or actively promote it."

"Anyone who is convicted of contempt of court by breaching the injunction could face jail or be hit with a large fine."

"At the same time, by committing traffic offences they could be banned from driving or have their car seized."

The four Black Country councils and West Midlands Police secured the ground-breaking injunction after receiving hundreds of complaints about car cruising from residents and businesses over a number of years.

They ranged from complaints about dangerous driving, speeding and vehicles and spectators obstructing highways or residential or business properties, to excessive

noise, littering, verbal abuse and intimidation.

There has been a significant reduction in car cruising activity across the Black Country since the injunction came into force, and Chief Insp White added: "The injunction enables us, together with our partners, to continue to tackle those individuals who flout the laws of the road and pose a danger for innocent members of the public."

● For more information about the injunction, please visit <http://bit.ly/carcrusingban>. Incidents of car cruising should be reported to West Midlands Police on 101. In an emergency, always dial 999.



Ground-breaking – car cruising is banned in the Black Country

Injunction details

1 It is forbidden for anyone to participate in "car cruising" (as defined in the schedule below) anywhere within the claimants' combined geographical area known locally as the Black Country Area.

2 It is also forbidden for anyone to promote, organise, or publicise via e-mail, the internet or any publication or broadcast, any "car cruising" within the defined geographical area.

3 A power of arrest pursuant to section 27 Police and Criminal Justice Act 2006 shall apply to clause 1 above.

4 The order and power of arrest shall continue for 3 years following the commencement of this order or until it is varied or discharged by the court. This order shall come into effect at midnight on 2 February 2015 provided that the Claimants have completed certain steps. It shall, subject to further order, expire at midnight 1 February 2018.

5 Personal service of this injunction is dispensed with pursuant to rule 81.8 of the Civil Procedure Rules.

Schedule

1 "Car Cruising" means two or more motor vehicles (including motorbikes) between the hours of 3pm and 7am being on a highway or in a publicly accessible place within the Black Country Area at which any such vehicle or occupant of a vehicle performs any of the prohibited activities listed in clause 3 below which causes, or is capable of causing, any of the prohibited consequences set out in clause 4 below.

2 "Participating in car cruising" means being the driver of, or being carried in (or on), a motor vehicle (including motorbikes) in circumstances in which paragraph 1 above applies.

3 The prohibited activities referred to in clause 1 above are: speeding; driving in convoy; racing; performing stunts; sounding horns/playing music as to cause a significant public nuisance; using foul or abusive language; using threatening, intimidating behaviour towards another person; and causing obstruction on a public highway, whether moving or stationary.

4 The prohibited consequences referred to in clause 1 above are: excessive noise; danger or risk of injury to road users (including pedestrians); damage or significant risk of damage to property; significant risk of harm; significant public nuisance; and significant annoyance to the public.

● The full injunction and map showing the geographical area is available at <http://bit.ly/carcrusingban> and council offices.

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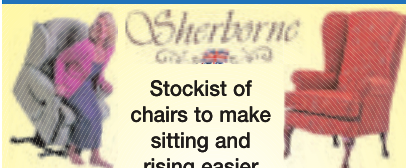
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Happier times in 2001: Ali on stage with UB40 in Birmingham



The original UB40 from 1983 with Ali on the right holding a glass of red, red wine



Ali's brother Duncan fronts the other version of UB40

Ali's UB40 mission

GETTING the opportunity to interview one of the biggest names in reggae music was always going to be interesting, heightened only by the fact that our subject for the afternoon is one of Birmingham's very own.

Not only is Ali Campbell still singing his former band's hits (we say former – it's complicated, as we'll explain), but he's also embroiled in a High Court battle with his brothers Robin and Duncan. It's like a reggae soap opera.

Having initially devised the idea for a band standing at a bus stop, Ali Campbell now finds himself sitting on top of a legacy of sales figures that push well past the 100 million mark, and a couple of UK number ones to boot. But now in 2016, having left the band in 2008, the climate that Ali finds himself in is much different.

As the vocalist for reggae stars UB40, Ali was part of the sound and face of a band that dominated the 80s and became a voice for the voiceless with their rebel music around the world. But the rights to the band's name are not his – they belong to his brothers, who still tour under the UB40 name. We told you it was complicated.

Now he's in the differently branded UB40 featuring Ali Campbell, Astro and Mickey Virtue. It's a sore subject, one that has taken Ali through the courts. He's not quiet about it either.

Positive

But first, we want to know what the second city's reggae son has been up to during his years away from the 'old' UB40.

"We've just come back from New Zealand actually, and it was one of the best tours we've ever done," Ali explains, the pleasure notable in his voice. "A couple of years ago, I got the idea to do a Red Wine vineyard tour, where we play a selection of vineyards around a country. I thought it was a funny pun and the promoters love a gag to hang a tour on, so we finally got it together and played seven different vineyards around New Zealand. They were all in beautiful locations.

"We've been to the Hawaiian Islands as well, and it really doesn't get much better than that."

We shake the images of lounging on a beach out of our heads, and quiz Ali about his band's upcoming UK tour. There is a date in Birmingham on Sunday, May 1, at the Barclaycard Arena. Are they looking forward to hitting the road again?

"Well we haven't really been off the road yet! Since Astro came back we've been solidly on the road for two and a half years. We've been selling out gigs all over New Zealand and Hawaii and then we've come home and found out we've more or less sold out these arena shows back in the UK! We're really chuffed."

Ali, trumpeter Astro and keyboardist Mickey Virtue all hail from Birmingham, and the city still holds a special place in their heart.

Ali said: "I can't wait to play in Brum again, the last time we played there was at the NIA and the love from the audience was wicked,



Ali Campbell, who says he is trying to save the legacy of UB40, pictured left, with band mates Astro and keyboard player Mickey Virtue

truly incredible. Me and Astro were quite shocked, the place was bouncing like a tub filled with grasshoppers and the noise we got from the crowd was lovely, it really was. Especially after the big fight that I've had on my hands."

The fight, he tells us, has been with the 'other' UB40. Though his voice is warm when he reminisces about his time in the city, it is less so when he talks about the other band touring under the UB40 brand.

"The dark side as I like to call them, all they've done is successfully split our fan base in half. For a while there was a lot of confusion and people didn't know what was going on. But since Astro joined me and we started doing all the old UB40 songs and stuff, it's been brilliant. It couldn't have gone any better really."

He's talking about his old bandmates who, fronted by his brother Duncan, have gone on to use the UB40 name on their tours.

The two bands have been embroiled in a battle over naming rights for years and were in the High Court only weeks ago.

Ali's brothers, plus James Brown, Norman Hassan, Brian Travers and Earl Falconer insist that Ali's band has no right to use the UB40 name in any form. They want an injunction and damages against Ali and his bandmates.

The court has now reserved its decision on

the case and will give its ruling at a later date.

"The thing is, I wasn't calling myself UB40 until Astro came and re-joined me in 2008," said Ali. "Before then I didn't feel as though I had the right to call myself UB40, but with Astro and later Mickey we had three original members. I felt as though I had to save the legacy of the band because what the dark side are doing is destroying it."

Identity

They're strong words flowing from the mouth of a man who certainly seems to have a bitter dislike towards his former band, and at times it makes for uncomfortable listening. But his reasoning shows that his strong views aren't just the by-product of a tit-for-tat argument, but are woven into a strong sense of identity, and what he thinks UB40 should be.

"I don't know if you've seen any of their shows, but they're knuckle-bitingly embarrassing. And I've been watching those shows and listened to their 'country' album, and when Astro came over I thought sod it, I'm going to try and save the legacy of UB40. It was my band, and one of the biggest reggae bands in the world, and the dark side are doing country music."

"It felt like a slap in the face both to me and the fans."

Because of this, Ali felt like it was important to carry on performing the tunes that elevated the band to legendary status, but on his own terms.

"I've never, ever gone out on tour without letting people know which UB40 we are. That's why we always say featuring Ali, Astro and Mickey. Which is something that the other band don't do – they don't let fans know that it isn't the original line-up."

The issue of confusing the two different bands reached a fever pitch in April 2014 when both were booked to play different venues in Dubai on the same day. Ali made the swift decision to change the name of his band to UB40 Reunited, to both avoid confusion and the potential legal action that would follow. But ever since, he's been glad to distance himself from his old band.

"They're the ones that are confusing everybody, we don't want to be mistaken for them. Because they're so bad."

We place ourselves into the shoes of a UB40 mega-fan, and imagine with a twinge of sadness what it must be like to see the rift that has grown between Ali and his former bandmates. What would Ali say to fans that couldn't decide on which version to go and see?

"Us squabbling means nothing, it's all about the music. I think fans can make up their own

minds. They can listen to my album, 2014's Silhouette, and the dark side's album 2013's Getting Over The Storm and they can make a choice in that respect."

"But also with the live stuff, they can come and see me and Astro who are the original singers, or Duncan, Ali's brother, who replaced Ali when he left the band and whoever else."

We wonder about the time when Ali left originally, and how he must have felt. Being one of the founder members, we imagine leaving your own musical baby in the hands of others would be an upsetting experience, and so too the prospect of performing solo.

Ali tells us more: "Of course I was nervous, I was leaving my own band. I paid for the instruments when we first got together and in 2008 I felt that I was forced into leaving."

But he added: "The other band are playing pubs whilst we're touring around the world, selling out shows and smashing it."

UB40 Featuring Ali Campbell, Astro and Mickey will be playing at the Barclaycard Arena on Sunday, May 1. Visit www.theticketfactory.com or call 0844 33 88 222.

STEVEN ECOTT

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See Page 23



Father Ken

New show – Page 23



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UB40 feat. Ali, Astro and Mickey



Sunday, time tbc
Barclaycard Arena, B'ham
 A seemingly never-ending rift in the top reggae band's camp is being settled in court, but this version features the original singer – expect the hits at this homecoming gig.
 Visit www.barclaycardarena.co.uk

Bad Jews



Tuesday to Saturday
New Alex Theatre, B'ham
 Joshua Harmon's hard-hitting and provocative New York comedy looks at the squabble between the young members of a Jewish-American family over who should inherit a family heirloom.
 Visit www.atgtickets.com

Bryan Adams



Saturday, 6pm
Genting Arena, NEC, B'ham
 The multi-platinum selling Canadian rocker (and acclaimed photographer) brings The Get Up Tour to Brum following the release of his 13th album, which was produced by Jeff Lynne.
 Visit www.gentingarena.co.uk

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds



Friday, 6pm
Genting Arena, NEC, B'ham
 Expect songs from latest album Chasing Yesterday and the self-titled debut, plus several Oasis favourites from the surly rock genius. Welsh mavericks Super Furry Animals support.
 Visit www.gentingarena.co.uk

ROCK & POP

The Bluetones
 Tue at 7pm - 11pm, £21
 The Institute, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DY.
 Call 0121 643 0428

Showaddywaddy
 Tonight at 7.30pm,
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE.
 Call 01527 65203

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds
 Tonight at 6pm,
 Genting Arena, Birmingham, B40 1NT.
 Call 0121 780 4141

Big Girls Don't Cry: A Tribute To Frankie Valli & The Four Seasons
 Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
 Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 1DE.
 Call 01543 578762

Fudgetock 2016
 Mon at 4pm - 11pm,
 The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
 Call 01902 401211

Creedence Clearwater Reviewed
 Thu at 8.30pm,
 The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
 Call 01902 401211

Dementia Awareness Fest 2016
 Sun at 3pm,
 The RoadHouse Birmingham, Kings Norton, B30 3DZ.
 Call 0121 246 2273

World Service Project
 Thu at 8.30pm,
 Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
 Call 0844 870 0000

This Will Destroy You
 Tonight at 7pm,
 The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0LD.
 Call 0121 753 1818

Benjamin Francis Leftwich
 Thu at 7pm,
 The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0LD.
 Call 0121 753 1818

The Boxer Rebellion
 Thu at 7.30pm,
 Hare & Hounds, Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
 Call 0844 870 0000

Michael Bolton
 Sun at 7.30pm,
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
 Call 0121 780 3333

Chris Cornell
 Mon at 7pm,
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Bryan Adams
 Tomorrow at 6.30pm,
 Genting Arena, Birmingham, B40 1NT.
 Call 0121 780 4141

Anastacia
 Tue at 7pm,
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
 Call 0121 780 3333

An Evening With Mark Lanegan
 Mon at 7pm - 10.30pm,
 The Glee Club, Birmingham, B5 4TD.
 Call 0871 472 0400

Boy Jumps Ship
 Thu at 7pm,
 O2 Academy Birmingham, B1 1DB.
 Call 0121 622 8250

Bon Giovi: Bon Jovi Tribute
 Tonight at 7.30pm, £8
 The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
 Call 01902 401211

Rat Boy
 Thu at 7pm, £8
 The Institute, Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DY.
 Call 0121 643 0428

Dixie Chicks
 Tonight at 7.30pm, £49.20
 Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham, B1 2AA.
 Call 0121 780 4141

JAZZ, FOLK & BLUES

Richard Digance
 Thu at 7.30pm, £16.25
 Prince Of Wales Centre, Cannock, Staffordshire, WS11 1DE.
 Call 01543 578762

Nina Nesbitt
 Wed at 7pm,
 The Institute, Birmingham, B5 6DY.
 Call 0121 643 0428

Daniel Champagne
 Tue at 7.30pm,
 The Robin 2 Hotel, Bilston, WV14 7LJ.
 Call 01902 401211

CLASSICAL & OTHER MUSIC

Thomas Trotter In Recital
 Wed at 7.30pm - 9.30pm, £9.50 - £25
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
 Call 0121 780 3333

Caroline Modiba
 Tue at 1.05pm - 2pm,
 Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, B3 3HG.
 Call 0121 331 5901

The Andrew Downes Performance Prize
 Tonight at 7pm - 9pm,
 Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, B3 3HG.
 Call 0121 331 5901

American Song Prize
 Wed at 7pm - 9pm,
 Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham City University, B3 3HG.
 Call 0121 331 5901

Full 100 2016! With Tarrus Riley
 Sun at 9pm,
 O2 Academy Birmingham, B1 1DB.
 Call 0121 622 8250

UB40 – Ali Campbell, Astro and Mickey
 Sun at 6.30pm, £30
 Barclaycard Arena, Birmingham, B1 2AA.
 Call 0121 780 4141

City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra
 Thu at 7.30pm, £12.50 - £45
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA.
 Call 0121 780 3333

David Rodigan
 Tonight - Tomorrow at 9pm - 3am,
 Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
 Call 0844 870 0000

The Loft Party
 Sat - Sun at 9pm - 3am,
 Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
 Call 0844 870 0000

Do Not Sleep
 Sun - Mon at 2pm - 12am,
 The Rainbow, Digbeth, Birmingham, B12 0LD.
 Call 0121 753 1818

Joe Goddard
 Sun - Mon at 9pm - 3am,
 Hare & Hounds, Kings Heath, Birmingham, B14 7JZ.
 Call 0844 870 0000

COMEDY

Debra Stephenson: Night Of One Hundred Voices
 Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE.
 Call 01527 65203

Thursday Night Comedy Carousel
 Thu at 7pm,
 The Glee Club, Birmingham, B5 4TD.
 Call 0871 472 0400

Jonny And The Baptists: The End Is Nigh
 Wed at 8pm,
 mac, Birmingham, B12 9QH. Call 0121 446 3232

Stand Up For The Heroes 2016
 Sun at 6.30pm,
 The Glee Club, Birmingham, B5 4TD.
 Call 0871 472 0400

Russell Kane: Right Man, Wrong Age
 Tomorrow at 8pm,
 Birmingham Town Hall, B3 3DQ.
 Call 0121 780 3333

TALKS

Shakespeare At The REP
 Thu at 12pm,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP.
 Call 0121 236 4455

Psychic Sally: Call Me Psychic
 Tue at 7.30pm,
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE.
 Call 01527 65203

Spotlight – After Anger: John Osborne & British Theatre Today
 Wed at 6.30pm,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP.
 Call 0121 236 4455

Artforum
 Wed at 4.30pm - 6.30pm,
 Wolverhampton Art Gallery, WV1 1DU.
 Call 01902 552055

Young Artists
 Tomorrow at 1pm - 3pm,
 Wolverhampton Art Gallery, WV1 1DU.
 Call 01902 552055

The Director's Role In Leading The Organisation
 Wed at 9.30am - 5pm, Thu at 9.30am - 5pm,
 Library of Birmingham, B1 2ND.
 Call 0121 303 4511

THEATRE

The Father
 Tue at 7pm, Wed at 7.30pm, Thu at 2pm, 7.30pm,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP.
 Call 0121 236 4455

Priscilla Queen Of The Desert
 Mon at 7.30pm, Tue at 7.30pm, Wed at 2.30pm, 7.30pm, Thu at 7.30pm,
 Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, WV1 1DE.
 Call 01902 573320

The Carpenters Story
 Tonight at 7.30pm,
 New Alexandra Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE.
 Call 0844 871 3011

A Night Of Dirty Dancing
 Thu at 7.30pm,
 Palace Theatre, Redditch, B98 8AE.
 Call 01527 65203

Kidderminster Rose Young People's Theatre: Red The Void
 Tonight at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 7.30pm,
 The Rose Theatre, Broadwaters, Kidderminster, DY10 2RX.
 Call 01562 743745

Experiential Dance: Bridging The Void
 Wed at 7.30pm,
 mac, Birmingham, B12 9QH.
 Call 0121 446 3232

F(L)IGHT
 Tue at 7.30pm,
 mac, Birmingham, B12 9QH.
 Call 0121 446 3232

Swansea City Opera: La Boheme
 Wed at 7.30pm,
 Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, SY3 8FT.
 Call 01743 281281

Isle Of Woman
 Tomorrow at 8pm,
 Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, SY3 8FT.
 Call 01743 281281

Monty Python's Spamalot
 Tonight at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 2.30pm, 7.30pm,
 Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, SY3 8FT.
 Call 01743 281281

Arabian Nights...And Days
 Thu at 8pm,
 Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury, SY3 8FT.
 Call 01743 281281

Boldtext's Eurotrashd – 8 Short EU Referendum Plays
 Tue at 8pm - 9.30pm, Wed at 8pm - 9.30pm,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP.
 Call 0121 236 4455

Calling For Help!
 Tonight at 8pm,
 Artrix, Bromsgrove, B61 1PQ.
 Call 01527 577330

Flare Path
 Tonight at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 2pm, 7.30pm,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP.
 Call 0121 236 4455

Dial M For Murder
 Tonight at 7.30pm, Tomorrow at 2.30pm, 7.30pm,
 Wolverhampton Grand Theatre, WV1 1DE.
 Call 01902 573320

Folk
 Tonight at 7.45pm, Tomorrow at 7.45pm,
 Birmingham Repertory Theatre, B1 2EP. Call 0121 236 4455

KFA: Elements Of Dance
 Tomorrow at 2pm,
 Symphony Hall, Birmingham, B1 2EA. Call 0121 780 3333

Check out full listings in **the ticket** in Friday's Express & Star

Duncan delighted that life's a drag

FROM boy band hunk to drag queen — Duncan James is barely recognisable in his latest stage role.

The tattooed star of Blue could hardly look any more camp donned in bright platform shoes and a dress made of pink and yellow flip-flops.

Starring as Tick in hit musical Priscilla Queen of the Desert, he will be at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre for a six-day run from Monday.

As one of four members of pop band Blue, James sold more than 16 million records and is sure to draw crowds from across the Black Country.

As Tick and his alter ego drag queen Mitzi, James will be stepping into the frocks previously worn by the likes of Jason Donovan and Darren Day.

Aussie

Priscilla Queen of the Desert is based on the 1994 Australian film, The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert, and follows the journey of two drag queens and a transsexual woman as they travel across the Aussie outback. On the road the trio meet a variety of characters and have to deal with a whole host of difficult situations including homophobic abuse and facing up to their pasts.

The action is accompanied on stage by a dazzling array of outrageous costumes and a hit parade of dance-floor favourites including Say a Little Prayer, Go West, Hot Stuff and Always on My Mind.

Joining James in the lead roles are Simon Green as Bernadette and Adam Bailey as Felicia.

After recently taken a break from



Duncan James is joined by his character Tick's drag queen alter ego Mitzi

the show, James tweeted: "Feels so strange to be on stage in Priscilla after having five weeks off! It's a weird feeling but finding my feet again — or should I say heels. It's going to be fabulous."

During winter 2014-15 the hunky singer, who had three number one

albums and 40 number one singles worldwide with Blue, starred as Jack in the pantomime Jack and the Beanstalk at Birmingham Hippodrome. He is also known for appearing on the 2007 series of Dancing on Ice.

Book at www.grandtheatre.co.uk or call 01902 429 212.

Actor back in winning role

ONE of the most highly acclaimed new plays of the decade is coming to Birmingham Rep in the production that won Kenneth Cranham the Olivier Award for best actor this year. Following an acclaimed run in London, the veteran actor will return to the role that saw him take theatreland's most celebrated prize.

The Father will be staged at Birmingham Repertory Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, May 7.

The play was written by French playwright Florian Zeller and received an unprecedented ten five-star reviews from national newspaper theatre critics.

The crisp and witty translation by Christopher Hampton of this intriguing and compelling drama sees Cranham reprise his unforgettable performance as Andre, and is joined by Amanda Drew, as his daughter Anne.

The character is an 80-year-old former tap dancer, or was he an engineer? The thing is, he is still wearing his pyjamas, can't find his watch, and is starting to wonder if he's losing control.

Cranham's many credits includes major roles in the West End and on Broadway, TV including Shine On Harvey Moon, Rome, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, and films ranging from Chocolat and Made In Dagenham to Hellraiser II.

Performances are at 7pm on Tuesday and at 7.30pm from Wednesday to Saturday with matinees on Thursday and Saturday. Tickets start at £13.50 and can be bought by calling 0121 236 4455 or visiting birmingham-rep.co.uk website.

Country stars are on the way to Brum

THERE are major musical highlights coming up for country music fans. Tonight (Friday) the Dixie Chicks bring their Taking The Long Way tour to the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham. With over 30 million albums sold, they are the biggest female band of all time in the US.

America's new star Brantley Gilbert, who has had double platinum albums with Halfway to Heaven and Just As I Am, will be playing Birmingham O2 Institute next Saturday, May 7.

Tomorrow (Saturday) catch four acts for £4 when the Emma Swindells Band are joined by Holloway Road, Chloe Chadwick and Gary O'Dea at Bantock House in Wolverhampton.

Slam dunk fun with the Globetrotters

THERE will be lots of slam dunk fun at the Barclaycard Arena in Birmingham on Saturday when the Harlem Globetrotters celebrate 90 years of basketball trick-shot entertainment.

The latest generation features Big Easy Lofton, Ant Atkinson, Hi-Lite Bruton, Thunder Law, Bull Bullard and Cheese Chisholm plus female stars TNT Maddox and Sweet J Ekworomadu.

Expect ball wizardry and amazing rim-rattling shots, plus lots of comedy in a show for all the family. Arena doors open at 6.30pm and the pre-game warm up starts at 7.10pm.

Fudgetstock in return to Robin 2

A MUSIC festival which raises money for Macmillan Cancer Support will take place at Bilston's Robin 2 on Bank Holiday Monday.

Fudgetstock returns to the venue and will feature Bethan & The Morgans, Craig Pate, Dead Sea Skulls, Electus, Mike Surman, Phoenix Rising and The Father Teds.

The event is being held in memory of Bill Edis, who was a sound engineer at the Robin 2 and died in November last year, aged 44. A charity auction will also take place during the event.

Tickets are £5 advance and £6 on the door. Doors open 4pm. Call box office on 01902 401211.

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CHOICE



Home Fires (ITV, 9pm)
The villagers prepare for harvest time, but Steph struggles to cope with the workload and faces losing the farm if she cannot meet her quota. A newcomer to the community stirs up tension between Sarah and Frances, while Joyce and the Brindsleys also receive unexpected visitors. Teresa faces a big decision, while Sarah finds herself in a dangerous situation. Alison discovers the real reason behind the parachute accidents and makes a horrifying connection to the factory. She races to warn Frances before it is too late.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **2.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **3.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.45** Points of View. **4.00** Songs of Praise. **4.35** David Attenborough Meets President Obama. (R) **5.15** Pointless Celebrities. (R)
6.00 **Paul O'Grady: The Sally Army and Me.** The presenter takes on one of the Salvation Army's hardest tasks when he visits a hospice for the terminally ill before joining a marching band in Oxford Street. Last in the series.
6.30 BBC News.
6.50 Regional Programme.
7.00 **Countryfile.** Ellie Harrison visits Dorset's South Haven Peninsula, and discovers the story of 1930s conservationist Cyril Diver, who performed a groundbreaking survey of the area's ecosystem. She meets an ecologist working for the National Trust to discover how the results of his work have been used and what the future holds for the region. Plus, a selection of highlights from the series featuring conservation projects. Including Weather For The Week Ahead.
8.00 **Antiques Roadshow.** Fiona Bruce presents the show from Lyme Park in Cheshire, where items brought in to be valued include a pair of pistols and a portrait of actress Sarah Bernhard. Last in the series.
9.00 **Undercover.** New evidence emerges that could prove Rudy's innocence, but Nick is unable to stop a vital piece of information being revealed that threatens everything that she has worked towards.
10.00 BBC News.
10.20 Regional Programme.
10.30 **Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the latest Premier League action, featuring Southampton v Manchester City.
11.40 **Film: The Last Castle.** (2001) A court-martialed general sent to a high-security military jail sets out to bring down the cruel warden. Thriller, starring Robert Redford.
1.45 World Snooker: Crucible Classics.
3.45 Weather for the Week Ahead. **3.50** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 The Great Chelsea Garden Challenge. (R) **7.15** This Farming Life. (R) **8.15** An Island Parish. (R) **8.45** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.15** Countryfile. (R) **10.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.45** The Hairy Bikers' Asian Adventure. (R) **12.15** MOTD2 Extra. **1.00** Flog It! (R) **2.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The opening session of the final at the Crucible Theatre.
6.00 **Natural World: Meet the Moose Family.** The nature documentary tells the story of a mother moose bringing up her calf in the wilds of the Canadian Rockies. Many challenges lie ahead for the mother and son, not least from the threat of hungry bears and wolves that live nearby. Film-maker Hugo Kitching sets out to follow the duo through the four seasons, although things take an unexpected turn later in the year with the discovery of a third moose. (R)
7.00 **Live Snooker: The World Championship.** Hazel Irvine presents all the action from the second session of the final at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre, where a further nine frames are scheduled to take place. The second session of last year's final took on a similar pattern to the first, with Shaun Murphy threatening to open up a sizeable lead over Stuart Bingham, before being pegged back to an advantage of just one frame, heading into the final day 9-8 ahead. The commentary team features five former world champions in Dennis Taylor, Steve Davis, John Parrott, Ken Doherty and Stephen Hendry, along with Willie Thorne and John Virgo. Subsequent programmes subject to change.
11.00 **Film: Rabbit-Proof Fence.** (2002) Three Aboriginal children parted from their mothers by the government embark on an arduous journey home. Fact-based drama, with Evelyn Sampi.
12.25 Sign Zone: Countryfile. The team looks at the landscapes across Britain that inspired Shakespeare, while John Craven is joined by Judi Dench to visit a town in Kent where the Bard's company performed. (R) **1.25** Holly City. Arthur rallies when Moven's dad is admitted with liver disease, while Zosia persuades a terminal patient to be a guinea pig for Jac's new stent prototype. (R) **2.25** This is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knockor Street. **6.25** Pat & Stan. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Sooty. (R) **7.15** Super 4. (R) **7.30** Nerds & Monsters. (R) **7.45** The Tom & Jerry Show. (R) **8.00** Teen Titans Go! (R) **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Weekend. **9.25** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **10.20** Murder, She Wrote. (R) **11.20** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **12.25** ITV News: Weather. **12.30** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R) **1.35** All Star Family Fortunes. (R) **2.20** Fierce. (R) **3.20** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **4.35** Midsomer Murders. (R) **6.30** Regional Programme: Weather.
6.45 **ITV News: Weather.**
7.00 **The Chase Celebrity Special.** Bradley Walsh presents as celebrity contestants Mikey North, Una Healy, Carl Froch and Alison Hammond pit their wits against ruthless quiz genius the Chaser in the hope of winning a potential prize pot worth thousands of pounds. They must work as a team and play strategically to answer general knowledge questions against the clock and race down the game board to the exit without being caught.
8.00 **The Durrells.** The family faces the unwanted arrival of a domineering aunt, while Larry's girlfriend also pays a visit – giving the unwelcome relative an opportunity to voice her disapproval of the whole family. Even makes an offer that helps Louisa cope with adversity and Margo falls in love – but Gerry is more concerned with his newly acquired owlets.
9.00 **Home Fires.** The villagers prepare for harvest time, but Steph faces losing the farm if she cannot meet her quota. A newcomer to the community stirs up tension between Sarah and Frances.
10.00 **ITV News: Weather.**
10.20 **Super Free Farm.** Six famas faces undertake a dietary experiment to live without sugar for two weeks, moving into a farm, where they work in return for healthy, wholesome food. (R)
11.20 **Premiership Rugby Union.** Action from the 21st and penultimate round of regular-season fixtures, including Sale Sharks v Gloucester, Exeter Chiefs v Wasps, and London Irish v Harlequins.
12.15 Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK. **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** The King of Queens. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. (R) **1.30** Channel 4 Racing. Including the 1,000 Guineas at 3.40. **4.00** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.00** A Place in the Sun. (R) **5.45** Channel 4 News.
6.00 **Formula 1: Russian Grand Prix Highlights.** Action from the race at the Sochi Autodrom, where Lewis Hamilton was hoping to make it a third successive win on this track. Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate Nico Rosberg started the 2015 race on pole, but a retirement on the seventh lap due to a locked throttle handed the lead to the Brit, who took full advantage and would eventually go on to win his third world championship at the end of the season.
8.00 **Paul Merton's Secret Stations.** New series. The comedian takes a tour of Britain's 152 request stop stations to find out why they are there, who uses them, and the history of the area, with the aid of experts and enthusiasts. Paul begins his journey in the Scottish Highlands, stopping at Attadale to visit Lochcaroon and a local salmon farm. He then takes a trip on the Cumbrian Coast Line, getting off at Drigg and Silcroft, where he meets a group of fell runners. Finally, he visits Ferryside in Pembrokeshire and St Keyne Wishing Well Halt in Cornwall.
9.00 **Indian Summers.** Alice and Aafin plan to flee the country, and Cynthia offers to help them escape to Australia. However, Charlie comes dangerously close to uncovering their plan. Ian drowns his sorrows following Soon's decision, which leads him to accidentally stumble on a surprising revelation about an old friend that could put a stop to Ralph's political ambitions.
10.00 Gogglebox. (R)
10.55 **8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown.** Jimmy Carr hosts the comedy panel show's version of the words-and-numbers quiz, with regulars Sean Lock and Jon Richardson joined by guests Miles Jupp, Greg Davies and Holly Walsh. (R)
12.00 **Film: Red Lights.** (2012) **2.00** Come Dine with Me. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Peppa Pig. **6.05** Bananas in Pyjamas. (R) **6.20** Angelina Ballerina. (R) **6.30** Bob the Builder. (R) **6.45** Ticky Toc. (R) **6.55** Zack and Quack. (R) **7.05** Pets. **7.10** Noddy in Toyland. (R) **7.25** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.40** Little Princess. (R) **7.50** Pip Ahoy! (R) **8.05** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.30** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.45** Wanda and the Alien. (R) **9.00** Toby's Travelling Circus. (R) **9.15** Jelly Jamm. (R) **9.30** LazyTown. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. **10.30** The Championship: Football League Tonight. (R) **11.30** Goal Rush: Football League Tonight. (R) **12.00** The Gadget Show. (R) **1.05** **Film: Another Cinderella Story.** (2008) Premiere. Musical comedy, starring Selena Gomez. **2.50** **Film: Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked.** (2011) Comedy sequel, starring Jason Lee. **4.30** **Film: Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs.** (2009) Animated comedy, with the voice of Bill Hader.
6.10 **Now That's Funny!** A bride gets cold feet at the altar, and various clips feature people who do not get what they want.
7.05 **The Secret Life of Puppies.** Two-part documentary following puppies' first year of life, beginning with the first eight weeks – the crucial period from birth to the moment they join their human families. (R)
8.00 **Penn & Teller: Fool Us in Vegas.** A man who designed illusions for David Blaine, David Copperfield and Dynamo performs his own act, while another magician performs a traditional card trick while blindfolded.
8.55 **5 News Weekend.**
9.00 **Film: Elysium.** (2013) Premiere. In the future, most of the human race exists in poverty on a ruined Earth, while a wealthy elite live in luxury on an orbiting space station. A man dying of radiation poisoning fights security forces to gain access to the satellite and its medical facilities. Sci-fi thriller from the director of District 9, starring Matt Damon, Jodie Foster and Sharlto Copley.
11.10 **Film: Drive Angry.** (2011) A man breaks out of Hell to track down the cult leader who has murdered his daughter and plans to sacrifice her baby. Fantasy thriller, starring Nicolas Cage and Amber Heard.
1.00 SuperCasino. **3.10** The Tube: Going Underground. (R) **4.00** Great Scientists. (R) **4.50** Great Artists. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 The Good Old Days **8.00** The Man Who Discovered Egypt **9.00** The Silk Road **10.00** Redefining Juliet **10.45** Film: Hamlet (1964) **1.10** The Sun **2.10** Horizon: Are We Alone in the Universe? **ITV2**
11.30 Take Me Out **1.20** Catchphrase **2.05** **Film: Charlotte's Web** (2006) **3.05** FYI Daily **3.10** **Film: Charlotte's Web** (2006) **3.55** **Film: Liar Liar** (1997) **4.55** FYI Daily **5.00** **Film: Liar Liar** (1997) **5.40** Britain's Got Talent **6.55** Britain's Got More Talent **8.00** **Film: Skyfall** (2012) **9.05** FYI Daily **9.10** **Film: Skyfall** (2012) **10.55** Family Guy **12.45** American Dad! **1.40** The Cleveland Show **2.30** Teleshopping **ITV3**
1.05 Wycliffe **2.15** **Film: Columbo: Etude in Black** (1972) **4.15** **Film: The Secret of My Success** (1987) **5.15** FYI Daily **5.20** **Film: The Secret of My Success** (1987) **6.30** Richard Wilson on the Road **7.00** Doc Martin **8.00** The Cruise Ship **8.30** Royal Stories **9.00** Bette Midler: One Night Only **10.00** The Blonde Bombshell **12.10** **Film: The American President** (1995) **1.10** FYI Daily **1.15** **Film: The American President** (1995) **2.15** Blue Murder **3.10** May the Best House Win **4.50** On the Buses **5.15** Judge Judy **5.40** ITV3 Nightscreen **ITV4**
11.00 Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire Live. Stage three from Middlesbrough to Scarborough. **5.00** Storage Wars: New York **5.55** The Wine Show **7.00** Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union **9.00** **Film: Mercury Rising** (1998) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** **Film: Mercury Rising** (1998) **11.15** **Film: Inside Man** (2006) **12.15** FYI Daily **12.20** **Film: Inside Man** (2006) **1.55** Hell on Wheels **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **E4**
1.00 Made in Chelsea **2.00** Joe & Caspar Hit the Road **3.00** **Film: Mr Popper's Penguins** (2011) **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **8.00** The Big Bang Theory: 200 Big Ones **8.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** Tattoo Fixers **11.00** The Inbetweeners **12.05** The 100 **1.05** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **Film4**
11.00 The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery (1966) **1.00** Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs (2009) **2.50** Millions (2004) **4.45** Cheaper by the Dozen (2003) **6.45** School of Rock (2003) **9.00** Bridesmaids (2011) **11.25** Byzantium (2012) **1.45** Damien: Omen II (1978) **4.00** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

Doc Hollywood, ITV, 10.30am

An arrogant doctor on his way to California causes an accident in a rural South Carolina town and is sentenced to community service at the local hospital. Initially desperate to leave, he gradually comes to appreciate a slower pace of life. Comedy, starring Michael J Fox. (1991)

TUESDAY

Paycheck, BBC1, 11.45pm

An engineer carries out a top-secret job on the understanding that his knowledge of the task will be erased from his mind afterwards to protect his employer's intellectual property. However, waking after the memory-wiping procedure, he is shocked to learn he had somehow agreed to waive the huge payment due to him – and is wanted for a murder he does not remember committing. John Woo's thriller, starring Ben Affleck, Uma Thurman and Aaron Eckhart. (2003)



The World Is Not Enough, Friday, ITV, 10.40pm

WEDNESDAY

Profile for Murder, Channel 5, 3.15pm

A criminal profiler retires to live in California with her family and move on from the horrific crime that ended her career. Her idyllic life is shattered when she discovers the serial killer responsible has escaped from prison and is intent on terrorising her. Thriller, starring Nicki Aycox and Steve Bacic. (2013)

THURSDAY

Deadly Pursuit, Channel 5, 3.15pm

An Alaskan wilderness guide visits a friend in LA, where he meets and falls in love with a well-off city girl. She clearly feels the same because when he returns home, she decides to follow him – only to come up against his ex-girlfriend and a sinister drug operation. Romantic thriller, starring KC Clyde. (2015)

FRIDAY

The World Is Not Enough, ITV, 10.40pm

James Bond is assigned to protect the heiress of an oil dynasty after her father is killed in a bombing at MI6 headquarters. The attack is the work of an infamous terrorist who is unable to feel pain after surviving a gunshot to his head. Spy adventure, starring Pierce Brosnan. (1999)

New comedy series is a real Royal affair

To mark the Queen's 90th birthday, there have been a few programmes that have promised an intriguing – but respectful – insight into what life is really like behind the closed doors of Buckingham Palace.

However, Channel 4's new sitcom The Windsors, which comes from Bert Tyler-Moore and George Jeffrie, aka the people who brought us Star Stories, definitely doesn't fall into that category. Instead, it presents the royals as we've never seen them before.

Bert explains: "It's looking at the real Royal Family, so using the real people – Will, Kate etcetera – as our characters, and presenting them in a larger-than-life, fictional soap opera."

"So it's the real life Windsors, but done as if they're in something like Dynasty or Dallas. It's a very heightened and very silly parody version of reality, I suppose."

He adds: "We know the real Wills flies a helicopter, so we've exaggerated that to the Nth degree

and have stories where our Wills is a real action-hero guy flying a helicopter and saving people's lives and behaving like a Tom Cruise-type character."

You might think that the writing duo had planned the series to coincide with the Queen's birthday, but it seems there is no real agenda behind The Windsors beyond making people laugh.

Bert says: "We never really thought 'Oh wow, the Royal Family are crying out to be done.' They're an institution that is always there. I think we just thought it was a funny idea, and then I suppose when we started thinking about it more seriously, we realised that they hadn't really been done properly since Spitting Image, and that's a long, long time ago. That's 25-30 years ago now."

In fact, it seems if anything, working on the series has made the writers fonder of the royals in general – and one member in particular.

George says: "I like our Prince Edward, who's sort of our age group. He's a contemporary of ours, and

he's often perceived as such a failure. So we've enjoyed a trip down memory lane, bringing up things people may have forgotten. Things like getting into Cambridge with a C and two D's. It's a Royal Knockout, being booted out of the marines after a couple of months."

"It's all in good fun. I like him a lot. They're all great, but I think he's my favourite."

We'll get to meet the rest of the Windsors in this opening double bill, including Prince Charles (Harry Enfield) as he tries to keep order, Wills (Hugh Skinner), who wants to mingle with people, and Pippa Middleton (Morgana Robinson), who is determined to bag a prince of her own.

The opening edition finds Kate (Louise Ford) attempting to win the royals over by helping Harry (Richard Goulding) with his fancy dress ball at Buckingham Palace. However, she'll have to contend with a gate-crashing Sarah Ferguson (Katy Wix), and a scheming Camilla (Haydn Gwynne), who is out to sabotage her efforts.



The Windsors, Friday, Channel 4, 10pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Invictus: The Road to the Games BBC1, 7pm

Named after Invictus, the Latin for 'Unconquered, Undefeated', the 2014 games in London were a resounding success with around 300 competitors from 13 countries competing in athletics, archery, indoor rowing, powerlifting, road cycling, sitting volleyball, swimming, wheelchair basketball and wheelchair rugby. In this one-off documentary, Nick Knowles shares the inspiring stories of men and women in the armed forces who have been wounded, injured or suffer from PTSD as they vie for a place in the UK Armed Forces Team at this year's event at Walt Disney World, near Orlando, Florida. Meanwhile, the brains behind the Invictus Games, Prince Harry, catches up with some of the competitors from two years ago and talks about his hopes for the forthcoming event, which he launched alongside First Lady Michelle Obama last October.

TUESDAY

In the Club BBC1, 9pm

Kay Mellor's drama returns, picking up the action 10 months (although some viewers might think nine might be more appropriate) after we last saw the group of new mums, who first met at a Parent Craft

class. Kim is doing her best to look after her little daughter Emily, but her relationship with Neil is looking shaky, especially as she prepares to see her ex-girlfriend Susie for the first time since they split up. Meanwhile, it seems 10 months isn't long enough for Dev to live down the fact that he locked baby Amber in a van, as his and wife Jasmin's mothers have moved in and are refusing to leave. Sadly though, that's about to be the least of their problems.

WEDNESDAY

Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit BBC2, 9pm

English Classical scholar Mary Beard explores the physical world of the Roman Empire, finding surprising parallels with our own world. She discovers a vast empire bound together by a common material culture, and a globalised economy of such scale that evidence of its side-effects can still be seen today. As Mary examines a huge commercial and cultural network, she takes in the vital supply of olive oil to Rome, the slave trade, and the silver mines of



Mary Beard's Ultimate Rome: Empire Without Limit, Wednesday, BBC2, 9pm

Spain. Following the famous Roman road network, the presenter also reveals another side to the Roman Empire, where builders and traders eclipse soldiers, and slaves make the most of a hugely connected new world.

THURSDAY

Peaky Blinders BBC2, 9pm

New series. Cillian Murphy returns as Birmingham-based mobster Thomas Shelby in the third run of author Steven Knight's period drama. At the end of the last series, having outwitted his enemies once again, Shelby announced he was getting married – but who to? At last the long-awaited ceremony has arrived, but in the middle of the celebrations, a mysterious visitor puts the entire Shelby family in

danger, pulling the mob boss into a web of intrigue more lethal than anything he has yet encountered. Helen McCrory, Paul Anderson, Sophie Rundle and Joe Cole star as the family, with an appearance from Alexander Siddig (last seen as Dorne ruler Doran Martell in Game of Thrones).

FRIDAY

MasterChef: The Finals BBC1, 8.30pm

After seven weeks of challenges, the search for the country's best amateur cook reaches its climax. The three hopefuls must push themselves to the limit for one last time as they face the final challenge of producing three exceptional courses, in which they must push the culinary boundaries to ensure that they impress the judges. Then it's over to John Torode and Gregg Wallace, as they decide which of the trio deserves to succeed last year's victor Simon Wood and be crowned MasterChef Champion 2016. Last in the series.

The Secret

ITV, 9pm

When Lesley inherits money from her father and threatens to leave him, it forces Colin's hand, and with Hazel's help he puts his murderous plan in motion. James Nesbitt stars.

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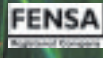


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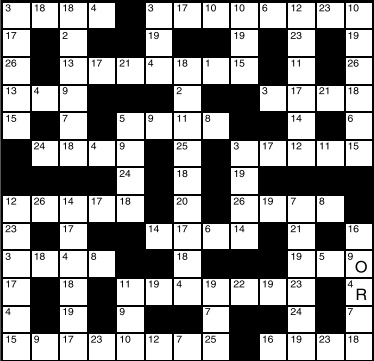
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BRAIN GYM No.375

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

Q	G	D	S	J	W	B	O	X	K	N	E	M
U	Y	I	T	L	R	A	Z	C	H	F	V	P

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

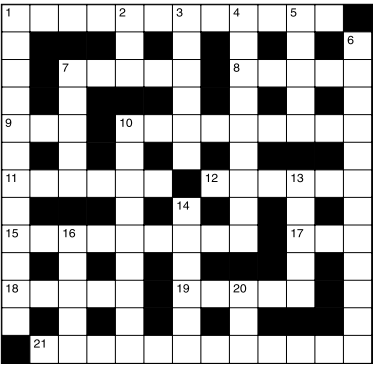
Cryptic Clues:

Across

- 1. This man's note may produce surprise (12)
- 7. Slide about and move sideways (5)
- 8. The "thank you" letter from Greece (5)
- 9. One hundred that is about to freeze (3)
- 10. False description of atheists? (9)
- 11. Puts up a secret entanglement (6)
- 12. Smooth tongue? (6)
- 15. Does such timber provide immunity? (5-4)
- 17. A ship that carries goods ashore (3)
- 18. Finally acquired an earthwork (5)
- 19. The doctor may take one for an idler (5)
- 21. Won't they want a penny for their thoughts? (4-8)

Down

- 1. Thrice curate perhaps - it's a way to earn a living (12)
- 2. What one does when agreeably tired? (3)
- 3. Such a railway may make a fair profit! (6)
- 4. Timber which may be put to striking use? (9)
- 5. She's exact about one point (5)
- 6. Old radio parts of the highest repute (4-8)
- 7. Cultivated European (5)
- 10. Yet it means there's only a slim hope! (3,6)
- 13. I am a long time getting the likeness (5)
- 14. Who had turned round the elephant's seat? (6)
- 16. Below two foreign articles (5)
- 20. Admit changes now (3)



Quick Clues:

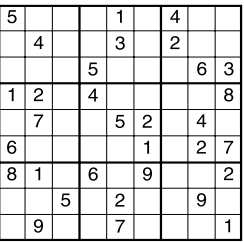
Across

- 1. Part of golf-course (7,5)
- 7. Dismay (5)
- 8. Supple (5)
- 9. Pinch (3)
- 10. Haughtiness (9)
- 11. To place (6)
- 12. Spider's trap (6)
- 15. Ornaments for horses (9)
- 17. Rocky hill-top (3)
- 18. Precise (5)
- 19. Laziness (5)
- 21. Sports ground (7,5)

Down

- 1. Mufti (5,7)
- 2. Little devil (3)
- 3. In abundance (6)
- 4. Devout (9)
- 5. Consumed (5)
- 6. Echoed (12)
- 7. Savoury jelly (5)
- 10. Aversion (9)
- 13. Observe (5)
- 14. Concord (6)
- 16. Benefit (5)
- 20. Lout (3)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid below so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	5	4	8	6	9	7	3	1
3	1	8	7	2	4	5	6	9
6	7	1	3	5	8	4	2	
7	3	9	4	8	1	6	2	5
6	2	1	3	5	7	9	8	4
8	4	5	6	9	2	3	1	7
1	9	3	5	4	6	2	7	8
4	6	2	9	7	1	3	5	8
5	7	6	2	1	8	4	9	3

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 4 Miscall; 8 Untrue; 9 Homonym; 10 Treads; 11 Hinder; 12 Increase; 18 Commando; 20 Teaser; 21 Imogen; 22 Spreads; 23 Little; 24 Density. Down: 1 Curtain; 2 Stretch; 3 Subdue; 5 Isotherm; 6 Crowns; 7 Laymen; 13 Accredit; 14 Knights; 15 Bounded; 16 People; 17 Assets; 19 Memoir. QUICK - Across: 4 Weighly; 8 Umpire; 9 Aground; 10 Lethal; 11 Nation; 12 Variable; 18 Farical; 20 Vigour; 21 Evolve; 22 Effaced; 23 Bruise; 24 Already. Down: 1 Outlive; 2 Upstart; 3 Armada; 5 Engineer; 6 Growth; 7 Tendon; 13 Befriend; 14 Acclaim; 15 Altered; 16 Sinful; 17 Donate; 19 Covert.

Thinking space



Quiz

- 1. On which island is the port Launceston?
- 2. What type of animal is a duiker?
- 3. What is the name of Birmingham City Football Club's home ground?
- 4. Of what is the angstrom a unit?
- 5. Who directed the film E.T.?
- 6. Which conductor established the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in 1946?
- 7. What is the middle period of the Mesozoic era called?
- 8. Which union is known as the RMT?
- 9. Which term for a group of hostile infiltrators originated in the Spanish Civil War?
- 10. What is the full name for the medical condition ME?

Last week's solutions:

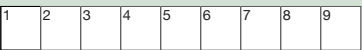
Quiz: 1 The Hague; 2 David, 2nd king of Israel; 3 Colorado; 4 John Noakes; 5 Jutes; 6 Eye; 7 Georges Bizet; 8 Alps; 9 Orion; 10 Peach.

Niner: PATRONISE

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

5845 gives a boy's name,
97631 gives a second boy's name,
97429 gives a third boy's name.



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WHATS ON!

7 MAY • IL DIVO LIVE!
14 MAY • HAWORTH 1940s WEEKEND
27 MAY • CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW
4 JUN • BEAUMAIS GEORGIAN FAIR
11 JUN • QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY CRUISE & WINDSOR
25 JUN • CHATSWORTH FLORABUNDANCE
9 JUL • HAMPTON COURT FLOWER SHOW • FL GRAND PRIX
AUG • EDINBURGH TATTOO (MANY DATES)
15 AUG • SOUTHPORT FLOWER SHOW
28 AUG • TALL SHIPS REGATTA

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MON 30 MAY, 20 JUN, 18 JUL, 8, 22 AUG, 3 OCT

WARNER STUDIO TOUR Making of Harry Potter

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SAT 28 MAY, 11, 25 JUN, 20 AUG, 3, 24 SEP, 8 OCT

FOLKESTONE & CROSS CHANNEL CRUISE TO OSTEND

5 DAYS FROM £179.95
4 NIGHTS HALF BOARD Burstin Hotel
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MON 9, 16, 23, 30 MAY, 6, 13, 20, 27 JUN, 11, 18, 25 JUL

LIVERPOOL BEATLES TOUR MERSEY CRUISE & CHESTER

2 DAYS £79.95
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SAT 28 MAY, 18 JUN, 9, 30 JUL, 13 AUG, 10, 24 SEP

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SAT 21 MAY, 16 JUL, 6 AUG, 3 SEP, 15 OCT

BOURNEMOUTH & GUERNSEY CRUISE

5 DAYS FROM £219.95
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• Includes fantastic day trip to Guernsey

MON 9, 23, 30 MAY, 6, 20, 27 JUN, 4, 11, 25 JUL

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5 DAYS MON 30 MAY, 1, 15 AUG, 24 OCT

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5 DAYS FROM £159.95
4 NIGHTS HALF BOARD Carnelot Castle Hotel
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MON 9, 23 MAY, 5, 19, 26 SEP, 3, 10, 24 OCT, 21 NOV

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27 MAY, 17, 24 JUN, 22, 29 JUL, 5, 12, 19, 26 AUG, 23, 30 SEP, 21 OCT	9, 16, 23, 30 MAY, 6, 13, 20, 27 JUN, 4, 11, 18, 25 JUL, 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 AUG, 5, 12, 19, 26 SEP, 3, 10, 24 OCT	29 MAY, 19 JUN, 10, 31 JUL, 7, 28 AUG, 11 SEP * Visa Station, Sarnow & Dartmoor visited at Exeter & Dawlish

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY
GUIDE TO HOME
BUYING AND
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Substantial and distinctive detached home

In a delightful and desirable setting overlooking the impressive grounds of New Bradley Hall and adjoining the former glass museum, 17 Compton Drive, Kingswinford is a distinctive and substantial modern detached family home.

Coming with a double garage, driveway and good sized, level sunny rear garden and being at the head of a cul-de-sac, this home is extended and spacious, being for sale through Taylors at £395,000 with no chain.

Compton Drive is approached from Stream Road and is within walking distance from the heart of Kingswinford.

With gas central heating and double glazing it has a canopy porch, a reception hall with stairs off and under-stairs storage, a re-fitted WC, a generous lounge with French doors to the rear garden, a living flame gas fire in an inglenook-style fireplace surround and double doors opening to a formal dining room with a walk-in bay window.

Luxury

The luxury re-fitted breakfast kitchen has a superb range of oak finish Shaker-style units with soft closing cupboards/drawers and complementary working surfaces and a sink and drainer, integrated dishwasher, electric hob, cooker hood, double fan assisted oven, utility/laundry room with oak finish units, working surface and a door to the garden.

Off the first floor L-shaped galleried landing is bedroom one with an en-suite shower room. Bedroom two has open views to the frontage while bedroom three also overlooks the frontage, bedroom four overlooks and rear while bedroom five overlooks the side.

The re-fitted house bathroom includes a bath and a separate shower cubicle.

Outside is a broad front/side driveway with planted borders, a double garage and gated access to the rear garden. This comprises a full width paved patio area, a well maintained lawn, stocked borders, an ornamental pond with a fountain and a gravel path to a small vegetable patch. The rear garden has a sunny aspect.

Established in 1987, Taylors Estate Agents has five offices successfully addressing the needs of home sellers and buyers in the Black Country.

KINGSWINFORD £395,000



TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Taylors
TEL: 01384 401777
EMAIL: kingswinford@
taylors-estateagents.co.uk

KEY FEATURES

- 5 bedrooms
- Luxury re-fitted breakfast kitchen
- Well placed for commuting
- Close to good schools
- Energy rating D



TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Hicks Hadley
TEL: 0121 5856667

Much-improved and extended semi is located in a popular area of Halesowen

A much-improved and extended semi-detached property in a popular area in Goodrest Avenue, Halesowen is within walking distance of good local schools, local amenities and close to transport links.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £259,950. Its accommodation briefly comprises a re-fitted extended kitchen, a large lounge/dining room, a downstairs shower room which has been expensively re-fitted with a large fully tiled walk-in shower cubicle, low flush WC, wash hand basin, fitted spot light, tiled flooring and a heated towel rail, three double sized bedrooms and a family bathroom.

The property further benefits from having large rear garden, a driveway with parking for several cars, gas central heating and double glazing.

For information cvisit www.hickshadley.com

KEY FEATURES

- Refitted extended kitchen
- Large lounge/dining room
- Downstairs shower room
- Walking distance to schools
- Price: £259,950



Substantially extended and detached dormer bungalow has rear garden views of woodland

A substantially extended detached dormer bungalow with an amazing private aspect to the rear overlooking woodland, 23 Haden Hill Road, Halesowen, is for sale through Humberstone Homes at £324,950.

It has an entrance porch, an open plan entrance hall, a lounge, a sitting room, a dining room/bedroom three, a re-fitted bathroom with a shower and bath, a re-fitted modern kitchen, a utility area and a sun lounge to the rear.

HALESOWEN

£324,950

On the first floor there is an open plan landing/study area, two double bedrooms and an en-suite shower room in bedroom two.

To the front is plenty of off road parking with the block paved driveway and garage. To the rear is an extensive lawned garden. The property benefits from gas

central heating double glazing. The lounge has a flame-effect gas fire and stairs to the first floor. The sitting room has a chimney recess housing a flame effect gas fire and patio doors. The kitchen has a Belfast sink, granite worktops, a Rangemaster oven with a cooker hood above.

The rear garden has a raised wooden decked patio area. Contact Humberstone Homes on 0121 4221188 or visit www.humberstoneshomes.co.uk



Two-bedroomed house with a refitted kitchen, a conservatory and revamped bathroom

This superbly presented modern semi-detached property in Avery Myers Close, Oldbury, includes a refitted kitchen and bathroom.

Coming with a rear garden with timber shed, car port and off-street parking for two cars on block paved driveway, it is for sale through Derek Spires at £124,950.

It has a canopy porch, entrance hall with laminate flooring and a staircase off, superb kitchen with a four-burner gas hob, integrated

OLDBURY

£124,950

oven and breakfast bar, and a spacious lounge with wood-effect laminate flooring and French doors to a conservatory with wooden laminated flooring and PVC double glazed French doors leading outside.

Bedroom one has laminate flooring and and built-in wardrobe

with mirrored sliding doors, and bedroom two also has laminate flooring. The refitted bathroom has a white suite comprising panelled bath set in tiled surround with power mixer shower and glazed shower screen, hand basin with tiled splashback and low level WC, also a heated towel rail, ceramic tiled floor and obscured PVC double glazed window.

Contact Derek Spires on 0121 4204646 or visit www.derekspiresandco.com

Hicks Hadley

hickshadley.com
0121 585 6667

Halesowen Office Lettings & Property Management



SUTTON COLDFIELD, Hartopp Court £800 pcm+ Fees
A delightful ground floor 2 bedroom apartment with an en-suite to master. The property has excellent links to Birmingham City Centre, being located a short walk from the railway station, is gas centrally heated and double glazed and is located in a gated complex with secure allocated parking. EPC: TBC



WITHYMOOR, Aldeford Drive £725 pcm+ Fees
Well presented semi detached house situated on this popular estate. Occupying a quiet cul de sac location. Featuring an attractive lounge with breakfast kitchen to the rear. To the 1st floor there are 3 bedrooms and a family bathroom, whilst to the outside there are gardens to front and rear. In addition, there is a garage and drive, and the property benefits from gas fired central heating and double glazing. Not to be missed! EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Mayfield Road £695 pcm+ Fees
An unfurnished detached bungalow set in a quiet cul-de-sac in this very popular residential area close to schools and bus links. Featuring large lounge, fitted kitchen, conservatory, 2 double & 1 large single bedroom, gas central heating, double glazing, front & rear gardens, garage. A property to be seen and appreciated. EPC: TBC



WOLVERHAMPTON, Chelston Drive £650 pcm+ Fees
A 3 bedroom detached home located in a quiet cul de sac location and benefits gas central heating and double glazing. The accommodation briefly comprises a reception hall, lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, conservatory, 3 bedrooms, garage and paved driveway. EPC: TBC



BIRMINGHAM, St Pauls Square £650 pcm+ Fees
A part furnished 2nd floor studio apartment. The apartment is ready for immediate occupation has accommodation (accessed via secure concierge entrance) to comprise a hallway, fitted bathroom suite with shower over, bedroom area with fitted wardrobes, open plan kitchen/lounge area with fitted appliances, including fridge, oven, hob and washing machine. EPC: TBC



CRADLEY HEATH, Waterfall Lane £625 pcm+ Fees
Located within a short distance of Old Hill Train Station, a short drive from Black Heath and Cradley Heath, is this modern town house, featuring 3 bedrooms, 2 spacious lounges, house bathroom with shower over, stairs w.c., small enclosed garden, driveway for 1 car and also benefits from an integrated garage. EPC: TBC



BRIERLEY HILL, Bittern Walk £595 pcm+ Fees
A lovely extended totally refurbished semi detached residence ideal for a family. The property comprises 3 bedrooms, fitted kitchen, lounge, bathroom, driveway and garage, double glazing and gas central heating. Close to local shops. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Bloomfield Street North £575 pcm+ Fees
Extremely well presented and surprisingly large end terrace with off road parking. Within walking distance to Halesowen, local bus routes and shops, comprises 2 bedrooms, nice lounge, attractive fitted diner/kitchen with white goods including washing machine, utility room, house bathroom with shower, a glorious courtyard garden and gated driveway. EPC: E



ROWLEY REGIS, Mount Road £575 pcm+ Fees
An unfurnished semi detached family home in a popular location, briefly comprising of: 3 bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, spacious living room, kitchen, guest w.c., bathroom with shower, front and rear gardens and driveway parking. EPC: D



ROWLEY REGIS, The Heathlands £550 pcm+ Fees
Modern 2 bedroom mid terrace property close to Blackheath Town Centre and ideal for the M5 J2 and Rowley Regis train station. This lovely property features a spacious lounge, fitted kitchen, upstairs bathroom, front & rear garden, gas central heating, driveway parking. EPC: C



QUINTON, Lapal Manor Court £550 pcm+ Fees
This beautifully unfurnished 3rd floor apartment, close to local motorway access, featuring gas central heating, large living room, fitted kitchen, 2 bedrooms, bathroom with shower, secure allocated parking behind electric gates, contemporary style. EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN, Talbot Street £550 pcm+ Fees
●●● 1ST MONTHS RENT HALF PRICE ●●● A fabulous newly renovated mid-terrace house with complete re-wire, new alarm system, new roof, new 1st rated Bosch boiler, gas central heating, new carpets & decorated throughout comprising 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, downstairs bathroom with shower, 3 bedrooms, rear garden, on road parking. Ideally located a short distance from local shops, Cradley Train Station and the number 8 bus route. EPC: E



KIDDERMINSTER, Patin House £525 pcm+ Fees
A 1 bedroom ground floor apartment set in a converted Victorian house comprising of: porch, lounge, fitted kitchen with appliances and granite work tops, double bedroom, fully tiled bathroom with shower, study, gas central heating (under floor heating to kitchen & bathroom) double glazing, communal gardens and allocated parking. Available Now! EPC: TBC



HALESOWEN/COLLEY GATE, Ladysmith Road £525 pcm+ Fees
A mid terraced house in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. This house features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen with oven, hob, dining area, new downstairs shower room, 2 good size bedrooms, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden. EPC: TBC



QUINTON, Lapal Manor Court £525 pcm+ Fees
An unfurnished ground floor apartment briefly comprising: living room/fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower. Benefits include gas central heating, secure allocated parking. Ideal location for motorway access. EPC: TBC



DUDLEY, Southgate Way £499 pcm+ Fees
A stunning and spacious well presented furnished to suit 1st floor apartment featuring 2 bedrooms, electric storage heating, double glazing, open plan living room with fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, allocated parking space. Viewing highly recommended. EPC: C



WOLVERHAMPTON, Rothesay Gardens £475 pcm+ Fees
Modern 1 bedroom 2nd floor apartment now available, unfurnished, large lounge, fitted kitchen with gas hob/oven, gas central heating, secure entrance & allocated parking. The property has good access links to Wolverhampton and Birmingham. EPC: D



HALESOWEN, Walton Court £450 pcm+ Fees
A spacious 1st floor flat surrounded by maintained communal gardens in a popular location. Comprises entrance hall with storage cupboard, double bedroom, fitted kitchen with marble effect work surface, separate utility room, light and airy lounge, bathroom with shower over bath and shed. Available mid June. Garage not included. EPC: TBC



OLDBURY, Causeway Green Road £450 pcm+ Fees
Deceptively large and spacious. A split level apartment above local shops, within walking distance to bus links for Langley and Oldbury and close to J2 of the M5 comprises gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking to rear, with the added bonus of a porch, unfurnished. EPC: D



CRADLEY HEATH, Luanne Close £425 pcm+ Fees
This lovely unfurnished ground floor apartment, with views over the canal and on a popular development. Featuring 1 bedroom, spacious lounge, fitted kitchen with small fridge and washing machine, gas central heating, bathroom with shower, allocated parking, communal garden. EPC: C



CRADLEY HEATH, Victoria Gardens £395 pcm+ Fees
A modern top floor apartment, in the centre of Old Hill with local bus stop outside and Old Hill train station close by. This apartment comprises of 1 double bedroom, electric storage heating, double glazing, fitted kitchen, bathroom with shower, allocated parking, unfurnished. EPC: C

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Halesowen**Kent Road**

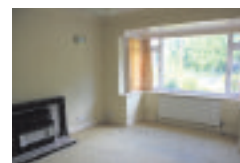
- * Ground floor flat
- * Kitchen/breakfast room
- * Living room
- * Two bedrooms
- * Shower room
- * Private garden
- EPC=tbc

Offers in the region of £119,950**Oldbury****Farm Road**

- * A tastefully presented mid terraced house backing onto Barnford Hill Park
- * Fitted kitchen/dining area leading off
- * Lounge with focal point fireplace * Sun lounge
- * Two bedrooms and bathroom on first floor
- * Principal bedroom on second floor
- * Pleasant enclosed rear garden EPC=tbc

Offers in the region of £149,950**Stourbridge****Birchgate**

- * Spacious detached house * Four good sized bedrooms and bathroom with both bath and shower
- * Two reception rooms, fitted cloakroom
- * Kitchen/breakfast room
- * Pleasant enclosed gardens, side garage
- * Gas boiler heating radiators, double glazed windows EPC=D

Offers in the region of £255,000**Stourbridge****Ham Lane**

- * A family house re-planned internally to form open plan accommodation * Fitted kitchen/dining room/ lounge * Principal bedroom with en-suite
- * Two further bedrooms * Fitted cloakroom
- * Dressing room/potential bedroom four
- * Garage divided to form play space and store/utility area * Enclosed gardens EPC=E

Offers in the region of £335,000**Halesowen****Lyttleton Avenue**

- * Detached House in need of modernisation
- * Two reception rooms
- * Downstairs wc
- * Three bedrooms
- * Delapidated garage
- EPC=E

Offers in the region of £175,000**Halesowen****Blackberry Lane**

- * A detached family house with four bedrooms
- * Desirable residential location with open aspect at rear * Lounge, dining room and study
- * Principal bedroom with en-suite, house bathroom
- * Fitted kitchen with host of appliances, utility room and fitted cloakroom * Detached double garage, lovely gardens * Inspection recommended EPC=C

Offers in the region of £385,000**Halesowen****Gower Road**

- * Brand New Detached Family House
- * Master Bedroom with Ensuite, 3 Further Bedrooms
- * Superb Fitted Kitchen/ Bathroom
- * Open Plan Kitchen, Dining Area, Breakfast Area
- * Living Room, Study, Utility Room, Fitted Cloakroom
- * Good-Sized Gardens, Side Garage
- * Completion Anticipated August 2016
- EPC=B

£450,000**Oldbury****Elsma Road**

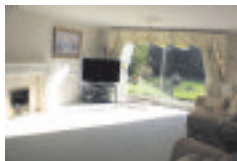
- * Semi-detached house
- * Dining room and living room
- * Three good sized bedrooms
- * Garage
- * Good sized rear garden
- EPC=F

Offers in the region of £205,000**Stourbridge****Plot 1 Yardley Street**

- * Brand New Detached House
- * Principal Bedroom with Ensuite, Two Further Bedrooms
- * Well Appointed Bathroom, Ensuite & Fitted Cloakroom
- * Quality Fitted Kitchen with Host of Appliances/ Dining Room
- * Lounge Opening to Good-Sized Gardens
- * Gas Boiler Heating Radiators, Double Glazed Windows
- * Completion Anticipated July/August
- EPC=B

£207,500**Halesowen****Brett Young Close**

- * Second floor flat
- * Open plan living space with kitchen area
- * Two bedrooms
- * Bathroom
- * Allocated parking
- EPC=B

Offers in the region of £109,950**Halesowen****Lodge Close**

- * A spacious four bedroom detached house.
- * Desirable location and enclosed gardens.
- * Two en-suites, house bathroom.
- * Lounge, dining room and study.
- * Fitted kitchen leading to conservatory.
- * Double garage with electric door, utility room.
- * Internal inspection recommended. EPC=C

Offers in the region of £550,000**Halesowen****Hagley Road**

- * Self contained flat
- * Main accommodation on first floor
- * Two bedrooms
- * Allocated parking space
- * Close to bus stop and shops
- EPC=C

Offers in the region of £114,950**Halesowen****Frankley Avenue**

- * Semi-detached house
- * Extended living room
- * Re-fitted kitchen, utility room and downstairs wc
- * Conservatory
- * Three bedrooms
- * Side garage
- * Good size rear garden EPC=D

£240,000**Halesowen Romsley****Dark Lane**

- * Impressive Detached Bungalow
- * Outstanding views of neighbouring districts
- * Principal Bedroom with Ensuite
- * Two Further Bedrooms & Shower Room
- * Lounge, Separate Dining Room
- * Fitted Kitchen, Utility Room, Sun Lounge
- * Double Garage, Landscaped Gardens EPC=E

Offers in the region of £550,000**Oldbury****Hamilton Street**

- * Semi-detached house
- * Fitted kitchen
- * Two bedrooms
- * Off road parking for two vehicles
- * 50% shared ownership
- EPC=C

£130,000

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Roller will appeal to younger buyers

By Matt Joy

A new Rolls Royce is a rare occasion, but its latest convertible is a creation to be savoured.

Before the arrival of the Dawn, the Phantom Droptop Coupe was the only convertible model in the Rolls-Royce line up, and tremendous though that car is, there was clearly a need for a slightly more manageable version with a lower price tag and broader appeal. With the smaller Ghost II saloon and Wraith proving there's a market for cars beneath the Phantom range, the Dawn is designed to meet those desires.

Speak to Rolls-Royce about the Dawn and they explain how it's designed to bring more sex appeal to the brand and attract younger customers – in fact, they go as far as describing it as “the sexiest Rolls-Royce ever built”.

That's for you to judge, but the Dawn gets a unique exterior, folding fabric roof and four-seater cabin, as well as the brand's superlative standards of refinement and build quality.

Choice is something of a misnomer when it comes to specifying your Dawn because you can have any colour you like, but it's more crucial than ever to pick right when it comes to this particular car.

More sober hues lend an air of discretion, but go for a lighter paint shade and a contrast roof and you can really see the modern influences.

The Dawn has an almost California look to it, thanks to the wheelarches stretched tightly over the wheels and the slimmed down glass area.

Supremely

It's not so extreme as to frighten off older buyers, but at the same time, if you start seeing Dawns cropping up in LA-set music videos, don't be surprised. This really is a Royce for the YouTube generation.

Rolls-Royce isn't big on compromise either, so although the Dawn is billed as a 2+2, it's a bit more generous than that.

Up front of course there's plenty of space, roof up or down, and although the wide centre console keeps you enclosed, it is in a comfortable manner.

The rear space however makes the Dawn a genuine four-seater. The seats themselves are supremely comfortable, and even sat behind a six-footer there's good legroom available.

The roof is the key element to the Dawn driving experience. With it raised, the cabin is cocooned and remarkably quiet, due in part to the effort Rolls-Royce put in with the six layers of fabric and 'French seam' stitching. It lowers in 22 seconds and in beautifully-engineered silence, and you can lower it driving at up to 31mph.

However you have the roof, the Dawn delivers a sumptuous driving experience you simply can't find elsewhere. While the physical differences between it and the Phantom are relatively small, the Dawn is more engaging to drive and happy to be hurried briskly along country roads, but still, it always demands very little of you.

The 6.6-litre V12 barely emits a murmur, but is always ready to provide rapid and effort-free acceleration.

There's not much in the way of competition at its basic price of £250,000.

It's spectacular to look out from the outside with a flawless finish, while inside, there is a delightful mix of wood, leather and metal trim.

More so than the rest of the Rolls-Royce range, the Dawn does have a little more to offer the younger buyer. Regardless of their demographic, buyers are attracted to quality of design and thoughtfulness of execution, which the Dawn is a perfect example of.

This car summed up in a single word: Magnificent

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Rolls-Royce Dawn, £250,000

Engine: 6.6-litre petrol unit producing 563bhp and 575lb/t of torque

Transmission: Eight-speed automatic gearbox driving the rear wheels

Performance: Top speed 155mph, 0-62mph in 4.9 seconds

Economy: 19.9 mpg combined

Emissions: 330g/km of CO2



Civic Sport variant launched

Honda has announced a new addition to the popular British-built Civic range. The 1.4 i-TEC Civic Sport will become the entry level product in the Civic family when it hits showrooms next month.

Priced at £18,360 OTR or £199 a month on a three year PCP deal with 5.9% APR and a deposit of £3,415, the new 1.4-litre petrol engine variant, available in manual transmission, joins the 1.6-litre, 120 PS diesel engine and the 1.8-litre, 142 PS petrol engine in the Civic Sport line up.

Specifically styled as a more sporty and aggressive version of the family hatchback, the Civic Sport features a

unique colour-coded rear spoiler and 17-inch alloy wheels and shares some of the striking design characteristics of the Civic Type R, with a lower grille mesh and a black roof lining for the cabin.

The advanced 1.4-litre i-TEC single overhead camshaft (SOHC) engine has been fine-tuned to boost both its dynamic performance and its environmental credentials. CO2 emissions are at 131 g/km while the engine delivers a maximum power output of 100 PS and a torque figure of 127 Nm.

With the next generation Civic concept unveiled at the Geneva Motor Show and due in showrooms at the start of 2017, Honda UK is revising the

current Civic family line up in line with customer demand. The Sport will become the entry level with the SE and SR grades completing the line up.

Philip Crossman, managing director at Honda UK, said: "The addition of the 1.4-litre petrol engine version of the Sport strengthens our Civic family line up and makes the more aggressively styled version of our popular family hatchback more accessible.

"The smaller engine makes the Civic Sport more economical and more efficient and therefore a much more attractive proposition."

The new 1.4 i-TEC Civic Sport will be available in Honda showrooms from May onwards.

<p>07/07 Range Rover Sport HSE 2.7 TDV6 Diesel Automatic 73k, Silver with Black Alloys, Black Leather, Sat Nav, CD, E/Windows £15995 / POA</p>	<p>06/06 Audi TT 1.8 Turbo 60k, Red, Alloys, Grey Leather, CD, E/Windows £5995 / £32 Per Week</p>
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<p>09/09 Audi A4 2.0 TDI Diesel 143 SE 5dr Multitronic Auto Estate, 88k, Black, Alloys, Digital Air Con, CD, E/Windows £9495 / £49 Per Week</p>	<p>10/10 Skoda Fabia 1.9 TDI Sport 60k, Mauve with White Roof, Alloys, Air Con, CD, E/Windows £5495 / £28 Per Week</p>
<p>09/09 Mercedes C250 Blue-Efficiency 2.2 CDI Diesel Elegance 84k, Grey, Black Leather, Alloys, CD, E/Windows £8495 / £46 Per Week</p>	<p>11/11 Ford Focus Sport 1.6 TDCi Diesel 5dr, 79k, Black, Alloys, Sat Nav, CD, E/Windows £5295 / £27 Per Week</p>
<p>10/10 Saab 9-3 Linear SE Cabriolet T1D 1.9 Diesel *ONE OWNER* Black, Cream Leather, Alloys, Air Con, CD, E/Hood, E/Windows £7995 / £42 Per Week</p>	<p>08/08 Renault Kangoo 1.6 Expression Automatic, ONLY 20k MILES, Blue, E/Windows, CD, Spacious MPV £4495 / £26 Per Week</p>
<p>09/09 Mini Cooper 1.6 Convertible 35k, White with Black Hood, Alloys, CD, E/Windows, E/Hood £7995 / £42 Per Week</p>	<p>08/08 Ford Mondeo 2.0 TDCi Diesel Edge 5dr [140] Automatic, 118k, Blue, Air Con, CD, E/Windows £3695 / £23 Per Week</p>
<p>08/08 Jaguar X-Type 2.2D S Diesel 4dr Automatic, 59k, Blue, Alloys, Half Cream Leather, Air Con, CD, E/Windows £6995 / £36 Per Week</p>	<p>04/04 Audi A2 1.4 TDI Diesel SE 5dr, ONLY £30 Road Tax, Black, Alloys, Climate, CD Player, E/Windows £2495 / £19 Per Week</p>
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<p>06/06 Toyota Rav-4 XT4 D-4D 2.2 Diesel 4WD 5dr, 75k, Silver, Alloys, Air Con, CD, E/Windows, E/Sunroof £6795 / £35 Per Week</p>	<p>02/02 Smart City-Coupe Smart and Pulse Automatic ONLY £30 Road Tax, 64k, Black, Alloys, Black Leather, Heated Seats, Glass Roof, CD, E/Windows £1995 / £15 Per Week</p>

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Light, lithe, fashionable Vitara SUV from Suzuki

By James Parker

The Vitara is the kind of youthful, dynamic-looking product that buyers of compact crossover models seem to want. On paper, it certainly seems to tick all the 'Juke-genre' boxes, with lifestyle looks, trendy cabin technology and superministandards of efficiency.

The performance-orientated 1.4-litre petrol turbo engine is one of Suzuki's newest units and gives this car a reasonable turn of speed, enabling it to make 62mph in 10.2 seconds en route to 124mph. Otherwise, the mechanicals aren't anything too surprising, shared as they are with the existing SX-4 S-Cross. That means buyers get to choose between either a 1.6-litre petrol engine or a much preferable Fiat-sourced 118bhp 1.6 diesel, both being offered in front or four-wheel drive guises.

The petrol engine is fitted with a five-speed manual gearbox as standard with an optional CVT transmission also offered. Go diesel and you get a six-speed manual 'box. The short overhangs will help with off-roading but the 185mm ground clearance isn't that generous.

The ALLGRIP four-wheel-drive system is standard with the 1.4-litre petrol turbo and optional with the 1.6-litre variants. The set-up features an electronically controlled clutch pack, controlled by a four-position switch on the centre console. Choose 'Auto' and it'll stick to driving the front wheels unless slip is detected, whereupon the rear wheels are pressed into action. 'Sport' diverts up to 20 per cent of torque to the rear wheels to give livelier handling. 'Snow' offers permanent four-wheel drive with the system choosing how much torque to split front and rear, while 'Lock' splits the torque equally between front and rear.

With tight proportions and a front end that has more than a hint of current Land Rover design about it, the Vitara is quite an assured piece of design work. There's also a blacked-out floating glasshouse, heavily sculpted flanks and a very neat taillamp finish. Buyers can also specify a rugged package which adds front and rear skidplates as well as additional body side mouldings.

Options

Suzuki cabins have long been the marque's weak link but this Vitara shows the company pulling its socks up a bit. Okay, so the idea of body-coloured metal across the dash isn't a new one but Suzuki also offers chrome around the gearlever and door trims, plus an analogue clock. It's by no means a large vehicle, breaking the tape at just over four metres long, but still features a 375-litre boot.

Prices start at around £14,000 for the entry-level 1.6-litre petrol version, but you'll need a £20,000 budget for the petrol

ALLGRIP 4WD version. 1.6 DDIS diesel model pricing starts at around £17,000. For the 1.4-litre petrol turbo ALLGRIP model, you'll need around £21,000. All variants get seven airbags, 16-inch alloy wheels, a DAB Radio with USB and Bluetooth connectivity, cruise control with a speed limiter, auto air conditioning, front and rear electric windows and projector headlamps. The plusher SZ-T trim level adds 17-inch silver painted alloy wheels, rear privacy glass, Smart-phone link audio and a navigation system. Moving up to SZ5 adds LED Projector headlights, 17-inch polished alloy wheels, suede seat fabric, keyless entry with start button, Adaptive Cruise Control, Radar Brake Support and a Panoramic sunroof.

There's a range of personalisation options and two key extra-cost packages. The 'Urban' package consists of fog lamp bezels (chrome-plated), body-side mouldings, and a roof spoiler. The 'Rugged' package delivers front and rear skid plates, fog lamp bezels, body-side mouldings and loading edge protection.

The Vitara's CO2 emissions are low thanks to the use of high tensile steel and other weight saving measures in the body plus an Engine Auto Stop Start system which shuts down the engine when stationary. Go for the base 1.6-litre petrol engine and you'll manage 53.3mpg and 123g/km, while the 1.6-litre DDIS diesel manages 70.6mpg and 106g/km. Obviously, expect those returns to take a bit of a knock if you specify ALLGRIP 4WD. The 1.4-litre petrol turbo ALLGRIP variant manages 127g/km of CO2.

Residual values might well stack up better than the industry average if the current crop of Suzuki models is anything to go by. Strong reliability records and modest optional equipment lists have helped to keep 'real world' residuals buoyant. The Vitara shouldn't divert too far from that template even if it does promise additional personalisation options.

Customers wanting a small Crossover now have so much choice that it must be difficult to know where to start. If that's the case for you, then beginning your search by looking at a great all-rounder in this segment seems to make a lot of sense. And this Vitara is certainly that.

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The Albion team who were in action in Belgrade. Back row, left to right, Brendon Batson, Ally Robertson, Tony Godden, Cyrille Regis, Bryan Robson, Ally Brown. Front: Derek Statham, Tony Brown, John Wile, Laurie Cunningham, John Trewick



Over to you, skipper...At the controls of the jet to Belgrade was Albion captain John Wile as team-mates arrive behind the Iron Curtain at the airport in Belgrade, Yugoslavia



Ron Atkinson who was deflated after Red Star Belgrade goal went in

Albion feel the heat in chilly challenge

SPORTING MEMORIES

By Joseph Masi

“Red Star were dead until that goal came. All the sparkle and life had gone and I could see us getting back to The Hawthorns with a 0-0 draw.”

THERE is nothing more daunting than facing 95,000 hostile supporters on a cold night in eastern Europe. But 37 years ago, that was the challenge faced by Ron Atkinson’s Albion side on their UEFA Cup adventure.

A Baggies side packed full of stars, travelled out to Yugoslavia to take on Red Star Belgrade at their imposing Marakana stadium.

Having previously defeated Galatasaray, Braga and Valencia, Atkinson’s men had made it through to the quarter-finals of the tournament – the first time in the club’s history they had successfully navigated through three rounds of European competition.

The day before, Albion’s players headed to a local television studio to watch a tape of their unknown opposition.

Pressure

And as they ran onto the pitch, an astonishing crowd of 95,300 supporters lay in wait for what turned into a fiercely contested encounter from two well-matched sides.

Atkinson’s line-up included Ally Robertson, Bryan Robson, Cyrille Regis, Laurie Cunningham and Ally Brown.

Albion started the fixture slowly and had to withstand lots of early Red Star pressure as they adapted to playing under a whistle-happy referee unused to a physical English game.

And they held on until the 85th minute, before a superbly struck free-kick from Dusan Savic – which clipped the inside of the post before finding the top corner – settled the first leg.

“Red Star were dead until that goal came,” said a deflated Atkin-

son afterwards. “All the sparkle and life had gone out of their game and I could see us getting back to The Hawthorns with a 0-0 draw.

“But having said that, I must admit it was a superbly taken goal,” he added.

“Mind you they had several similar chances early in the match and everyone was blocked by our solid defensive wall.

“They also have a reputation for being good at the back and now we know just how good they are.”

Upon their return to England, Atkinson’s Albion geared up for an FA Cup fifth round clash with Southampton – a match which they drew 1-1.

The return leg against Belgrade, at the Hawthorns, then took place on March 21 with the two teams battling to a 1-1 draw that saw Albion lose the tie 2-1 on aggregate.



Front of ‘queue’ are Albion players Ally Brown, Brendon Batson, Alistair Robertson and Bryan Robson posing with two air stewardesses



Microphone in hand a Yugoslav radio commentator gets the lowdown on the match from Albion trio Cyrille Regis, Laurie Cunningham and John Wile as the listening thousands get set for the big match



Captain glad as cricket play starts

HALESOWEN are out of the ECB National Knockout at the first hurdle – but skipper Richard Brooker says the club were just happy to finally get their season started.

Brooker's side were beaten by Kenilworth Wardens in a rain-affected game which reduced the overs.

The visitors scored 223-8 from 42 with Eddie Rhodes taking 4-35. In reply Halesowen were bowled out for 134. Kester Moseley offered resistance with 50.

Said Brooker: "It was a difficult first weekend for all the teams. It's early days and a long way to go and in some ways it was just pleasing to get out there and get some cricket played."

Saturday saw a combined first and second team take to the field against Astwood Bank – and the rusty Halesowen batsmen were dismissed for 165.

Will Barrett top scored with 45, Mohammed Shaubh notched 25 and both Dean Patel and Mark Fisher scored 20.

Astwood Bank won by eight wickets with debut boy Jack Myers taking 2-26 for Halesowen and Eddie Rhodes 2-27.

In the league games the 3rd XI were edged out by Martley who chased down 137 to win by one wicket. Comeback-kid Charlie Tromans picked up 4-29 in 14 hostile overs for Halesowen.

The 4th XI triumphed over their counterparts chasing down 141 and winning by seven wickets. Rob Reeves claimed 3-10, with two wickets each for Hassan Akram and Charlie Greening. Ben Dunn's unbeaten 85 was the cornerstone of the reply.

Tomorrow night (Friday), the club plays host to a quiz night where all entrants are welcome with an 8pm start in the club lounge (£5 adults £3 children).

To register, or for more details, contact Donna Tromans on 07702 822 331 or Laura Payne on 07968 271 009.

Hyde are down – and Yeltz rub it in with victory

Hyde Utd 0 Halesowen Town 1
HALESOWEN Town completed their season with a win at relegated Hyde, Tyree Clarke getting the winner.

Clarke has been a success at The Grove since joining from rivals Stourbridge two months ago and has helped the Yeltz to finish comfortably in mid-table in the Northern Premier League.

He could have opened the scoring as early as five minutes but shot narrowly wide before Kaiman Anderson missed a chance on 12 minutes when through on goal. Clarke saw a shot blocked by Hyde midfielder James Burke on 14 minutes and Anderson fired wide as Halesowen continued to attack in the first period, though Adam Jones for Hyde saw a shot saved by Yeltz goalkeeper Jake King.

Kaiman Anderson struck the post on 51 minutes but a minute later provided the cross which came back to Clarke who made no mistake.

Zeekell Parkes hit the bar and Peter Boyle headed wide as Hyde pushed for an equaliser but Halesowen were happy to come away with all three points on the final day of their season.

Team races to second in placings



Charles Walker on the track

THE fourth round of the Midland's Series proved to be both the fastest and the longest to date.

At more than 70 miles the racing was hard as it powered its way round the roads of Shropshire.

Halesowen had their strongest team so far with Tom Swinger returning to the racing team and Charles Walker making a quick return after a nasty road accident a few weeks ago.

However, it was Jack Stanton-Warren who lit up the race,

Cycling

attacking early on into a cold north easterly breeze with one companion to share the workload.

The pair managed to distance the peloton before they started to be wound back in.

Once caught, Walker showed excellent tactical nous in counter-attacking immediately with a group of five to get a one and a half minute gap. And Stanton-Warren's day was

not yet done. He managed to bridge across to the lead group, taking with him Matt Garthwaite, winner of the first race of the season.

At the finish it was Garthwaite taking the uphill sprint with Stanton-Warren edged into fourth and Walker an excellent seventh.

Oli Dighton, Joe Hobbs, Ben Crone and Tom Swinger all strongly contested the bunch sprint from the pack to propel the team into second place in the league standings behind Team Rhino.

DOUBLE WIN ENDS SEASON

Old Halesonians 2nds 26 Luctonians 2nds 22
OLD Hales welcomed back influential captain Rob Butler for their final game of the season – and they rounded off with a win after coming from behind.

Despite a strong start, Hales conceded the opening points. The hosts attacked continuously for the first five minutes of the game, but when the ball was spilled forwards, the Luctonians outside centre snapped up the ball and raced from his own half to score under the posts for a converted try.

A second try extended the lead, but the conversion attempt bounced off the upright.

Old Hales had to reshuffle their backs after 18 minutes when Tom Harris had to leave the field with an injury; Jamie Keen moved to fly half and Tom Shakespeare came off the bench to take over at scrum half. Keen was quickly into the groove and made a perfectly weighted chip kick over Luctonians defensive line; he raced forward and collected the ball cleanly with outstretched arms before sprinting 20 metres to the try line to score a quality try.

Old Hales had drawn level before half-time as Jake Shellis converted his own try.

Slender

It took only six minutes of the second period for Old Hales to go in front as Kieran Haynes squeezed over the line and Shellis converted.

Luctonians replied with a try, unconverted to leave Old Hales with a slender advantage. But they relinquished that lead when Old Luct scored another try, with the conversion again missed. At 22-19 behind, Old Hales rallied and went on the attack with purpose.

With five minutes of normal time remaining, Old Hales were awarded a penalty. Alex Gordon tapped the ball and powered towards the line, Kieran Haynes picked up from the ruck and attempted to cross the try line. He was tackled short. However, Sol Rogers was on hand to pick up and force his way over. Shellis converted from out on the left for Hales to regain the lead.

Six minutes of injury time were signalled by the referee but Old Hales held out during this nervous period to secure the win and the league double over Luctonians.

Hawks step out on mascot duty



Halas Hawks under-7s players on the terraces at The Grove before leading the teams out

JUNIOR footballers were rewarded for a successful season by leading out Halesowen Town players at a recent home game.

The Halas Hawks under-7s players were mascots at the Grove for the Yeltz clash against Grantham, which they won 3-0.

The date was arranged to promote Halas Hawks and to congratulate them for their hard work during their debut season.

The side, which plays home games at Homer Hill Park on Sundays, is in its first season in

the Stourbridge & District Youth and Girls League and played its opening competitive match last September.

A Halas Hawks spokesman said: "We were made very welcome at the Grove and given free programmes and free entrance for players and coaches."

"This opportunity really shows how local teams support grassroots football."

The memorable weekend was then topped off when the young side won its group trophy cup.

Cradley rain supreme as result stands

CRADLEY returned to winning ways with a comfortable 45-27 victory over King's Lynn in a rain-affected meeting on Monday night.

Heavy showers throughout caused a number of delays before a torrential downpour prior to heat 13 saw the meeting abandoned with the result standing.

Previously unbeaten Cradley were defeated by champions Birmingham as they launched the defence of their Travel Plus National League title with a 55-35 win at Perry Barr.

The team go to Coventry next Friday, May 6, before returning to Monmore for more National League action against the Isle of Wight on Monday, May 9.

Meanwhile, Heathens have unveiled plans for their showpiece Golden Hammer individual event which is set to pack the Monmore terraces this summer.

The meeting, one of the most famous open meetings on the domestic calendar, will take place on Tuesday, August 9 and will once again be promoting Dudley Stroke Association.

Promoter Gary Patchett describes the event as a 'celebration meeting' and admits he is excited by the potential line-up. He said: "The ethos of this wonderful meeting has always been a mix of Heathens riders past and present as well as previous winners."

"We are already looking to extend that theme this year and we are looking into inviting as many former Heathens' favourites back as possible."

"We want this year's Hammer to be a sort of celebration of former Heathens' success. So we'll look at inviting members of our memorable, dominant sides of 2013/14 as well as riders who've really progressed since moving on from the club."

The top five riders in the Heathens line-up will be joined by a host of ex-club riders.

Play-offs just out of reach for Glassboys

Stourbridge 1 Salford City 2

THE Glassboys missed out on the play-offs following this defeat which consigned them to sixth spot.

Stourbridge had to win, while Salford arrived at Amblecote already having secured third place.

Michael Itella scored twice to silence the crowd, either side of a Stuart Pierpoint leveller.

Meanwhile, a 1-1 draw against champions Tamworth meant Stourbridge Ladies finished second in the Birmingham County Women's League Premier, winning promotion to the west Midlands regional Women's League.

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